

CONSTRUCTED FASHION

THE CATWALK SYSTEM AS AN ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT



Constructed Fashion: The Catwalk System as an Architectural Project

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RESUMEN

Teniendo en cuenta que no hay nada que se escape de la moda ¹, y extendiendonos más allá de esta manida discusión sobre intersecciones formales, esta investigación propone la pasarela como un lugar real de mediación entre moda y arquitectura. Asumiendo esta condición, la pasarela encarna nuevos modos de producción apropiándose de su espacio y estructura, y convirtiéndose en una máquina capaz de generar múltiples y más bien infinitos significados.

La moda es sin duda un proyecto creativo, que ha venido utilizando la pasarela como un marco para la reordenación de su narrativa visual, renovándose así mismo como fenómeno social. Este proyecto de investigación plantea, que contrariamente las tipologías actuales de las pasarelas no nos facilitan la comprensión de una colección – que suele ser el objetivo principal. Presentan en cambio un entorno en el que se acoplan diferentes formatos visuales, -con varias capas-, convirtiéndolo en una compleja construcción y provocando numerosas fricciones con el espacio-tiempo-acción durante el proceso de creación de otros territorios.

Partiendo de la idea de la pasarela como un sistema, en el que sus numerosas variables pueden producir diversas combinaciones, esta investigación plantea la hipótesis por la cual un nuevo sistema de pasarela se estaría formando enteramente con capas de información. Este escenario nos conduciría a la inmersión final de la moda en los tejidos de la virtualidad.

Si bien el debate sobre la relevancia de los desfiles de moda se ha vuelto más evidente hoy en día, esta investigación especula con la posibilidad del pensamiento arquitectónico y como este puede introducir metodologías de análisis en el marco de estos desfiles de moda, proponiendo una lectura de la pasarela como un sistema de procedimientos específicos inherente a los proyectos/procesos de la arquitectura. Este enfoque enlaza ambas prácticas en un territorio común donde el espacio, el diseño, el comportamiento, el movimiento, y los cuerpos son ordenados/organizados en la creación de estas nuevas posibilidades visuales, y donde las interacciones activan la generación de la novedad y los mensajes.

PALABRAS CLAVES: moda, sistema, virtual, información, arquitectura

ABSTRACT

Considering that there is nothing left untouched by fashion², and going beyond the already exhausted discussion about formal intersections, this research introduces the catwalk as the real arena of mediation between fashion and architecture. By assuming this condition, the catwalk embodies new modes of production that appropriates its space and turns it into a machine for generating multiple if not infinite meanings.

Fashion, as a creative project, has utilized the catwalk as a frame for rearranging its visual narrative and renewing itself as social phenomena. This research disputes, however, that the current typologies of catwalks do not facilitate the understanding of the collection – as its primary goal - but, instead, present an environment composed of multi-layered visual formats, becoming a complex construct that collides space-time-action in the creation of other territories.

Departing from the analysis of the catwalk as a system and how its many variables can produce diverse combinations, this research presents the hypothesis that a new system is being formed entirely built out of information. Such scenario indicates fashion's final immersion into the fabrics of virtuality.

While the discussion about the relevance of fashion shows has become more evident today, this research serves as an introductory speculation on how architectural thinking can introduce methodologies of analysis within the framework of the fashion shows, by proposing a reading of the catwalk as a system through specific procedures that are inherent to architectural projects. Such approach intertwines both practices into a common territory where space, design, behaviour, movement, and bodies are organized for the creation of visual possibilities, and where interactions are triggered in the making of novelty and messages.

KEY WORDS: fashion, system, virtual, information, architectural

¹ Gilles Lipovetsky, El imperio de la efímero

² Gilles Lipovetsky, The Empire of Fashion

Fashion - Lady Gaga

Fashion

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Slay, slay

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Fashion

Step into the room like it's a catwalk

Fashion

Singing to the tune

Just to keep them talking

Fashion

Walk into the light

Display your diamonds and pearls in light

Fashion!

Married to the night

I own the world we own the world

Look at me now

I feel on top of the world in my

Fashion

Look at me now

I feel on top of the world in my

Fashion

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Slay, slay

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Looking good and feeling fine

Slay, slay

You've got company

Make sure you look your best

Fashion

Makeup on your face

A new designer dress

Fashion

There's a life on Mars

Where the couture is beyond, beyond

Fashion

Married to the stars

I own the world we own the world

Look at me now

I feel on top of the world in my

Fashion

Look at me now

I feel on top of the world in my

Fashion



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fashion and architecture	The already known relationship between fashion and architecture has always
comfort	navigated the terrain of human comfortability, visual connections and formal-
visual	ism. The simple action of putting both words together immediately triggers
formal	a set of pre-conceived ideas, mostly around how they intersect visually and
	how one assimilates conceptual formal particularities of the other, especially
protection	towards the human body (protection and shelter). The use of same compu-
shelter	ter softwares and technological materials have also solidified their common
	ground in a territory where buildings adopt a fluid/fabric like format and clothes
envelopes	incorporate an architectonical look: they become envelopes. By intersecting,
geometry,structure,skin,volume	architecture and fashion have built a solid lexicon around geometry, structure,
wrapping, pleating, printing,	skin, volume, wrapping, pleating, printing, draping, folding, and weaving.
draping, folding, weaving	
informational strategies	This research disputes, however, that this intersection has shifted into a dif-
	ferent territory as both disciplines are recently facing changes in the very
	core of their daily practices ⁰¹ , redirecting their structural organization towards
	the definition of informational and thinking strategies between them and the
	society at large ⁰² .
program	As the negotiation between fashion and architecture moves to a scenario of
catwalk	programmatic social experiments, this research introduces the complex con-
	struct of the fashion shows – or the catwalk ⁰³ – as a space where the Fashion
	System trully exists and where both disciplines are not reduced to objects
interactions	or materials but, instead, become practices that relate to each other through
	strategical thinking and social/cultural interactions.
synergy	In fashion, these strategies and synergies first came into existence within the
body/collection/space/time	confined walls of the first fashion shows at the end of the 19th century. At
	that time, the catwalk as a manifold construct of body/collection/space/time

01. id magazine, think aloud: future fashion show, http://i-d.vice.com/en_gb/watch/episode/548/think-aloud-future-fashion, <http://www.maca.aq.upm.es/introduccion/introduccion.html>

02. In a recent lecture at the British School in Rome, architect Reinier de Graaf points out how the architectural practice now reseambles the one of a fashion design studio, mostly because of the way each of these fields deal with complex organizational programs, collaboration between professionals, strategical thinking, and evaluation results.

03. The word “catwalk” used to refer only to the elevated base where models walk in. Fashion industry has, however, incorporated this word as refering it to the whole performance taking place. For this reason, this research will consider catwalk and fashion shows as being synonymous.

architecture x architectural
communication

instead of an ephemeral one. This approach signifies the reduction of the *Architecture* in favor of the *Architectural*⁰⁴, as to perceive the phenomena not through its physical environment only but as an ever evolving communication project subject to strategies that mediate space, time and action in the creation of foreseen realities.

thought
manipulations

reality

The architectural approach conforms a shift towards the understanding of the catwalk as a space capable of creating relations between the built environment and the (un)real, conceiving other forms of thoughts and interactions through manipulations and associations between actors from many and opposite fields. While architecture is what situates our physical body in relation to the world, architectural is what project ourselves onto the fabric of reality (Morales, 1999) through embodied experiences and interactions between us and what surrounds/affects us. To understand fashion shows architecturally becomes a way of describing this phenomena as a reality constructed out of ways of thinking rather than real materials, and where transversal meanings become the substance in which fashion reality can be built of.

novelty

While the discussion about the relevance of fashion shows has become more evident today⁰⁵, this research serves as an introductory speculation on how architectural thinking could introduce methodologies of analysis within the framework of the fashion shows, proposing a reading of the catwalk as a system through specific procedures that are inherent to architectural projects. Such approach intertwines both practices into a common territory where space, design, behaviour, movement, and bodies are organized for the creation of visual possibilities, and where interactions are triggered in the making of novelty and messages.

1.2 methodology

There are two opposites forces at play. From one side, the introduction of the theme of fashion within architectural boundaries; from another side, the necessity to investigate fashion from a historical perspective, since it is something out of the scope of architecture academia.

04. According to Morales (1999), Architectural refers to the knowledge in which architecture exists, one that conforms the practice as a constant and never ending discipline that is constantly in the process of becoming.

05. Bustle.com, ID.com, Nytimes.com, to cite some of the online publications that have discussed during September 2014 again the relevance of fashion shows, assuming the position that they are as relevant as they were in the past.

The methodology in this research lies exactly on focusing on one side of this opposite forces, precisely fashion, as to situate the research entirely within a territory that comes from outside of architectural practice. Such approach intends to work in two different ways: first, as to give a consistent body of research that is immersed in fashion studies. Second, as to point out how architectural thinking can still be applied in totality even when displaced from its original source, being it architecture, generating new strategical and intersecting operations.

This research starts off through the recompilation of facts and historical events that are direct related to the creation of fashion shows. Most of what is introduced here is the result of a bibliographic compilation within fashion studies and sociology. There was, however, a concern on bringing into the fashion side some of the literature and references that are more commonly associated to the architecture academia - Virilo, Wigley, Deleuze, Benjamin, Zygmunt – as to create a game of comparison and overlapping between two theoretical opposite fields.

The concept of system is introduced alongside the description of historical events, through texts and diagrams that follow the text as a parallel narrative components. The diagrams serve as an introduction on how to transform the informational catwalk into forms of visual representation. They are a first experiment that could be later translated through other medias, such as an interactive website or hyperlinked analytical construct. It is a work in process that opens towards possibilities in a future doctor thesis and/or particular research.

All the body of research is concentrated on one specific occidental historical frame, encompassing the end of the 19th century until now. Such framing comes as fashion as we know it today is the result of all fluctuations (social, political, economical, cultural) that came from this moment in history, within a window of time that encompasses modernity, postmodernity, and our current liquid society.

The research is divided in three main bodies of texts (chapters), each one referring to the evolution of the catwalk, ranging from an introductory understanding of concepts that are relevant to the discussion, from the systematization of the catwalk and the eventual (hypothetical) transformation of the catwalk into a system of production of information:

- Chapter 02: Between Fashion And System

There are three important concepts in the process of understanding the catwalk system. They are respectively Fashion, System, and Fashion System. This chapter focuses on defining them individually, using as an example an installation piece done during a fashion week in Italy. This chapter works as an introduction on the subject of Fashion System, and serves to establish points of differentiation between these three conditions.

- Chapter 03: Defining The Catwalk As A System: From Fashion To Variables

The theme of the catwalk as a system is introduced through a detailed description of historical events within fashion history, and how these moments were determinant in defining the appearance of the catwalk through the systematization of its performance. The chapter introduces the diagrams as tool for interpreting the distinct systematic moments as visuals. It later presents how fashion produces its first three systems – production, spectacle, and image – and what were the outcome (input and output), converging into the final scenario that we have today within the industry.

- Chapter 04: The Augmented Catwalk: The In_Formation System Hypothesis

This chapter focuses on the hypothesis of the emergence of a fourth system – one of information – that is permeating the contemporary fashion industry and has again found on the catwalk a place for existence. From data to strategic thinking, this chapter concludes with the analysis of three case studies. Each of these relate to a specific shift within the system, highlighting its configurations as one of an augmented space that is merging into the virtual.

2. BETWEEN FASHION AND SYSTEM

GIANFRANCO

FERRE

IS NOT

DEAD

FASHION

SYSTEM

IS

2.1. an introduction on the subject of fashion + system: Neo as a case study

The Luisa Via Roma Store in Florence, known for selling luxury fashion items, invited the Italian artist Felice Limosani to design an installation piece for one of its windowshops during the Uomo Pitti 2010, a one week presentation of men's collections. The work, a light installation called Neo (picture on previous page), was built with a number of fluorescent lights with different lengths, piled up vertically and held by acrylic brackets. As a group, and having some of its areas covered with what seems to be black vinyl, the lights formed letters that spelled out the sentence " Gianfranco Ferré¹ is not dead. The fashion system is." The installation was described by the media as **a provocation² against fashion's constant and endless need for novelty.**

Neo is a work constructed around superficialities: the smoothness and shininess of the fluorescent lights's surfaces, the thin dark individual sticky membranes that form the letters, and the transparent glass that confines the installation are, perhaps, referring to fashion as *the profound human need for being superficial* (Koning, 1972) or it is simply fashion and its superficial discourse of seduction at play (Baudrillard, 1990). However, as we diverge from the medium and focus on the message – the fashion system is dead – these metaphorical ruminations become irrelevant and a first problem is revealed: a provocation does not happen by itself, it requires some sort of response or reaction from the other to fully exist and to be considered as such. In Law, for instance, an impulsive reaction based on anger is what defines a crime as a response to a provocative action (Horder, 1992). A provocation, because of its intensity, has to go beyond the outer layers of any skin in order to incite, arouse, and stimulate. Is it correct, then, to consider this installation piece as a provocation when there is no apparent reaction from the fashion system itself?

superficiality

Also, the problematic in Neo evolves around a phrase - a textual construct - that creates a game of opposites (one thing is not dead, the other is) suggesting the disappearance of the fashion system, two words that in itself encapsulate complex and opposite meanings. In this context, is it the same to affirm " Gianfranco Ferré is not dead. Fashion is" ? **And what exactly is this "fashion system" that is capable of triggering such hatred ?**

fashion system

¹ Gianfranco Ferré was a fashion designer also known as "the architect of fashion" for his background and his original attitude toward creating fashion design. He received a degree in architecture in 1969 at the Politecnico di Milano university. Sophisticated white shirts have become the symbol of his personal signature in fashion design.

phenomenon
visual construct
catwalk as a system

If something is dead, Neo is the corpse whose autopsys can answer these questions. This operation has to undoubtedly dismantel this semantic construct into pieces, separate all the tissues that conform fashion and system as individual entities and, later, rebuild them together as an entire different organism – the fashion system – one that has defined fashion as the social mechanism we know today. Neo's relevance to this present research, in this sense, lies on how the concept of fashion + system is introduced through the design of a physical structure that talks about **fashion as a social phenomenon not through clothes but, instead, through a visual construct**. Such condition intersects with the basic conceptual grounds that mark this study on the catwalk as a system.

2.2. entity one: fashion

art / fashion

It is not relevant here to discuss if Neo's provocation comes from the art world towards fashion as this discussion cannot be sustained just by the fact that this is a piece done by an artist in the subject of fashion critique. For one thing to be called "art", it has to depend on specific qualities that would define it as such, and Neo blurs those qualities to a certain extent by inserting itself inside of a context that has more to do with consumption and marketing than to art itself. Neo's designed installation falls in the same category of many other artist's works that have utilized the same physical and curatorial conditions: at the end, they become pieces of design, objects of decoration or, as in Neo's case, a vitrine ornament that function as a flytrap for passersby.

absence of clothes

Perhaps Neo's total absence of clothes is a first glimpse into the real provocation against the fashion system, especially if we consider how historically **clothes became the "medium"** in which fashion first came to existence. In his *The Empire of Senses*, Lipovetsky discusses how fashion came into being during the mid 14th century when a simple change in the size of a unisex dress altered its aspect, defining a fashionable distinction between male and female body and, as a consequence, triggering a revolution in clothing. He also discusses how, during the same period, the fluctuations in clothing designs were so extreme that were probably following the "air vibrations", changing every month, week, day, and hour (Lipovetsky, 2012) with absolute no reason. Also, the advent of Haute Couture in the end of the 19th century reinforces the idea of fashion as linked to clothes through tradition, beauty, and a designed exclusiveness.



first image that appears on google for fashion
+ presentation:
Black Provocation from Rock & Republic
advertisement

A general definition of fashion as the entire spectrum of attractive clothes (Hollander, 1993) in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles (Wilson, 2003) would be probably considered correct if not rational. The problem, however, is that fashion was born from the realm of the human conditions, which makes it subjective to many personal, cultural, and social ephemerality that have, in many instances, **turned fashion into an irrational subject** (Svendsen, 2006) that just happens to have first utilized clothes as its tool for existence. Many characteristics were and have been attributed to fashion: it has been called **frivolous** (Monneyron, 2006), as something that fulfills our **desire to imitate** (Simmel, 2014), a necessity for **identity** and **inclusion** (Mendes, 2010), as something **deprived of reason** (Lipovetsky, 2012), as a preoccupation for appearance (Mendes, 2010) and as a **replacement to thinking** (Riviere, 1992). *Fashion has been held up to ridicule and dismissed as a merely frivolous aesthetic phenomenon* (Mendes, 2010). This is, perhaps, what makes fashion a subject difficult to grasp, to be studied, and understood as having some kind of logical thinking. All this subjectivity, on the other hand, is what defines it as an ever morphing social ephemeral construct, independent of any particular object; it is first and foremost a social mechanism characterized by more or less fanciful shifts that enable it to affect quite diverse spheres of collective life (Lipovetsky, 1994), including the visual arts, architecture, design, music and so forth. Considering Gilles Lipovetsky's affirmation that **there is nothing left untouched by fashion** (1994), Neo's naked set moves away from clothing perhaps to specifically **talk about fashion from outside the territory of garment design**, introducing the concept of **fashion as this ideology** that applies to almost every conceivable area of the modern world (Svendsen, 2006). **Fashion is everywhere.**

The absence of clothes, however, is contradicted by the artist himself. According to him, the white surfaces of the fluorescent lights represent to a certain extent the simplicity of Gianfranco Ferré's designs, a designer known in Italy as the architect of fashion for his concerns about structure and simple forms. While clothes do not physically exist in the installation, they do inhabit a peripheral subjective territory of visual representation inherent to fashion's condition as an ephemeral discipline: the whiteness, seen as the ethereal materialization of Ferré's clothes, is structured as a white canvas or blank wall whose surface can become any image, any object, any text and, more importantly, something entirely Neo (new) as newness has been a sine qua non condition to fashion's survival. Such desire for the new/Neo is the sign of emancipation from authority and abolition of traditions that has marked the history of fashion within modernity (Svendsen, 2006). As one fashion

fashion as an irrational subject



Protesters crash Nina Ricci runway show in Paris Fashion Week

fashion ideology

whiteness

newness

dynamic dialect process

comes it sets the other (the past) free, breaking up from any imposed rules. As Barthes once said, “ **Every new Fashion is a refusal to inherit, a subversion against the oppression of the preceding Fashion.**” (2003). The aim of fashion is to be potentially endless, that is it create new forms and constellations ad infinitum (Svendsen, 2006). It has to be Neo. Again and again.

Fashion is a notoriously difficult term to pin down (Svendsen, 2006). Historically, there has always been a misunderstanding about when it first appeared, with many historians placing its emergence during the 14th century in a moment where the high class's frivolity encountered a place for existence under the many changes in the design of dresses just for the sake of it (Lipovetsky, 2012). Others consider the 18th century when a new social class, in order to compete with the feudal aristocracy for power, started using clothes to show off their new social status (Svendsen, 2006). Monneyron (2006) attributes the emergence of fashion to a new occidental social class that appears in the UK and France during the 19th century, a bourgeois democratic society where the figure of the individual (individuality) becomes a form of commodity. As the opinions diverge on the first emergence of fashion, they converge in one aspect: there is an economic / social status condition that seems to permeate fashion's existence as we know it. It is not by coincidence, it seems, that Neo is located in one of the most exclusive stores in Florence, a temple of consumption for few privileged and wealthy individuals: to provoke from within the problem. Its context, however, does not constitute by itself a strong evidence for the game of provocation that is being played here: the installation was not an imposed object neither an act of rebellion from the artist himself. Quite the opposite, Neo was commissioned, embraced, approved, and placed within a context that it would later declare as dead: without it, Neo would not exist.

The question in Neo emerges exactly on this accommodation within fashion's territory. For a work that is intended to provoke, Neo does not contradict fashion's intention to be new (as its title says), neither fashion's necessity to be anything. It actually inhabits its physical territory while metaphorically referring to fashion in a dual game of representation (clothes-no clothes). As what is being killed is not “fashion” but rather the “fashion system”, such accommodation within fashion's domain makes a clear distinction between both: Neo embraces fashion, but renegates the machinery that controls it – its system.

To comprehend the idea of system within this context means to step out of fashion and get into a scientific field of research. While fashion (as the production of clothes) and science might not have much in common, the interaction that happens in Neo might shed some light, if not a way of understanding this issue.

2.3. entity two: system

From the street, a passerby looks at Neo and sees a structure that is confined within the space of the windowshop. He/She stares at it and first examines its designed skeleton of fluorescent lights. The information received passes through his/her retina and it is then processed by 130 million photo-receptors that capture the image as light, identifies the objects, recognizes its existence. As he/she diverges the attention from the surface of the lights, he/she notices something written in it. This person's body then distances itself from the windowshop, walking backwards so he/she can see it in totality. As the body starts to move, the muscles's body expand and contract while working in conjunction with the bones that give physical support to the whole structure. These two distinct set of components – muscles and bones - act together while remaining separated entities. The person than reads the text and, again, receives the message that is processed as light. The process all over.

information
whole
process

On the other hand, Neo's imposed immobilized skeleton, while refrained from any kind of movement, is still capable of participating in this game of information. Its body is formed by lights of different dimensions but with same characteristics. They are structured together, emit a relatively equal light frequency, and their grouping form a solid element – let's call it a canvas – that works as the receptacle of a textual message. Although Neo's constructed physicality does not act independently from the artist's intention, it is still capable of performing an act and reaching a goal – **communicate a message** that is intended to provoke.

communication
message

Organic body (passerby) and constructed body (Neo), as different as they first seem, share in common a capacity to be organized around a set of elements (components) that are interacting among them, forming an **integrated whole** with a defined task: The observer – the body, the passerby – utilizes its organs (eye, cells, muscles, bones) to perform the goal of looking and decyphring a message. The observed – the installation, Neo – transmits a message through light surfaces, electricity, black vinyl, cables, and acrylic.

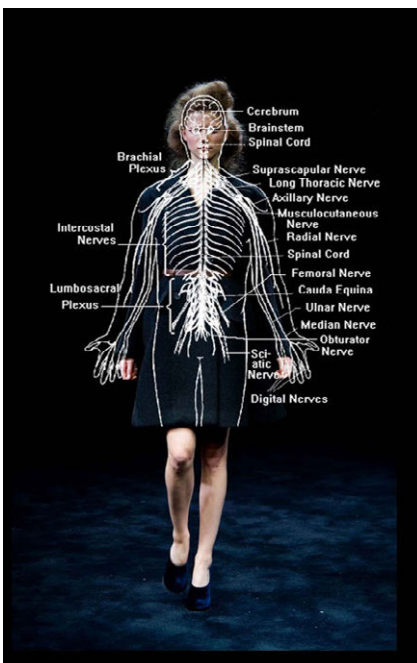
organic
constructed
organism

It is not by coincidence that both organisms could be understood as systems, as they partake the same characteristics of one: A general definition of system describes it as *a set of interrelated elements* (Ackoff, 1972) that are *dynamically interacted and organized in relation to a goal* (Rosnay, 1995):

- They have a **structure** (parts) that are directly or indirectly related to each other;
- They have a **behavior**, a process with a purpose;
- They are **interconnected** independently and between them;
- They have a **boundary** (physical and constructed)
- They both **interact** with their surroundings;
- They both are **systems within systems**, a condition accepted and proved within the studies of the General Theory² (the human body system formed by the nervous system that looks at the object, and the skeletal and muscle systems that moves the human body system as a whole; the Neo system is constructed around a lighting system and a surface system. It is inserted in a windowshop that, by itself, constitutes a spatial system of a larger system that is the capitalism).

systems within systems

visual gradient



fashion model body system

The human body system and the Neo system that participate in this imaginary game of representation where one looks at the other, play a relation of “something to look at “ – a point of view (Weinberg, 1975) - that defines the *necessity of a very high visual gradient for systematization to exist* (McLuhan, 1967). Such visual relation that happens between the physical boundaries of each system and its surroundings, which is what turns the subject of system a complex theoretical and experimental field that has not yet found a definitive General Theory but that has, instead, defined many different categories and conditions in which a system can exist (The International Encyclopedia Of Systems and Cybernetics has listed approximately 100 categories, not including the ones related to Systematics).

Neo’s boundary is the constructed surface glass of the windowshop, a space that is at the same time interior and exterior, in and out, closed and open, depending on the observer’s point of view. It is a physical entity, man-made construct that, according to the architect Frederick Kiesler’s opinion about windowshops, works as an *independent, quasi-three-dimensional event, an*

² The transdisciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena, independent of their substance, type, or spatial or temporal scale of existence. It investigates both the principles common to all complex entities, and the (usually mathematical) models which can be used to describe them. (Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy)

interactive conjunction of outside, inside, spectacle, desire, and the movement of passersby (Lavin, 2011). Kiersler understood the thin glass layer of the storefronts as *an opportunity to produce new kinds of urban happenings that might begin or be catalyzed by the plane itself but that have their consequence elsewhere, out there* (Lavin, 2011). The glass surface is what mediates these two systems – passerby and Neo -, turning itself into a point of friction that distinguishes a real separation between them, while allowing for a connection that is not only physical but also visual and, perhaps, emotional. In this regard, Neo's general categorization as an installation in a windowshop unfolds into the definition of a system that is, in fact, a combination of many (systems within systems): an Isolated system because of its enclosure, a Closed/Open system depending on the observer, a Controlled system that can be altered and shot down by an outsider, a **Physical system** because it actually exists through its materiality, a Man-made system because it was built by the artist, and an **Informational system** because of the ephemeral meaning it intends to address.

isolated system

As we zoom out from the scene, the storefront in which Neo is contained becomes a component of a larger structure - the store - a place that in itself incorporates another layer of complexity and logic that resides in the transformation of goods (fashion objects) into show business (Marchetti, 2009). If we only consider such condition, the store could assume the role of a secondary container that is emmersed into an economic and cultural system, two systems that do not physically exist and, because of that, fall into the categorization of **abstract systems**: *a system whose elements are concepts and that create relationships based on assumptions* (Ackoff, 1992).

abstract system

The final picture includes the passerby as the only natural system participant in this scenario. Its physical boundary defined by the skin that evolves the body, holds within distinctive and related systems (nervous, musculoskeletal, circulatory, respiratory, digestive, integumentary, urinary, reproductive, immune, lymphatic, and endocrine), with most of them directly or indirectly participant in the action of looking at Neo.

A passerby's body is also an emotional entity that sometimes dissociates itself from its physicality (physical system) in order to exist, mostly through abstract constructions that are intrinsic to the human conditions: happiness, sadness, desire, doubt, introspection, social and cultural exposition, just to name few of many abstract components that form this ethereal body (a men-

emotional entity

tal, emotional one) that inhabits a physical one. All these conditions could indicate the existence of some sort of system (Adaptive perhaps, as it shifts from one internal state to another as a response to variations in its environments (François, 2004)) that regulates the functioning and incidence of these events. Otherwise, chaos would prevail.

complexity

The act of looking and decyphring Neo, from a systematic point of view, turns out to be not a simple one. Quite the opposite, it enters the field of complexity that has defined most of the studies on General Theory of Systems today: Instead of one individual that looks at a windowshop trying to understand an installation piece, we have a human/adaptive/natural/physical system (passerby) that interacts with a Isolated,Closed/Open,Controlled,Physical,Man-made, and Informational system (installation) that is inserted within the boundaries of a larger economic/cultural/abstract system that is the store (which is at a time container and surrounding).



windowshop and advertisement
moschino, 1990

This hypothetical scenario of systems – or even systems within systems – highlights a condition that indicates that human action is structured into patterned networks. In order that the necessities of life be secured and so ensure that social life and the life of the individual (material or immaterial) will continue, there must be an act in an organized, collective manner (Carter, 2003).

The term “fashion system “ exemplifies that there is no exception to this rule.

2.4. combined entities: fashion + system

This subject – fashion system - lies visible in Neo as a semantic formation and letters, while remaining invisible as a dead body. A first attempt to decode it has to consider both general understandings – of fashion and of system – as separated ones:

fashion as ideology

a) **If fashion is a social phenomenon, an ideology**, that applies to almost every conceivable area of the modern world (Svendsen, 2006), independent of any particular object... characterized by more or less fanciful shifts that enable it to affect quite diverse spheres of collective life (Lipovetsky, 1994); These shifts rely on the desire for novelty/change – for the new, for the Neo, to become something new – as a key element within the complex machinery that triggers aspects inherent to our human condition, such as individuality, imitation, inclusion, frivolity, status, just to name few.

b) If System is a group or set of related or associated material or immaterial things forming a unity or complex whole (Carter, 2003) that are dynamically interacted and organized in relation to a goal (Rosnay, 1995).

It could be argued that the whole point of having a fashion + system is to sort out the differential components of fashion and then see how the complex network of relationships can join together these different dimensions into a dynamic and controlled whole (Carter, 2003). Such affirmation is, in its essence, true. The problem, however, lies on the definition of System that implies the necessity of creating a result, a goal. So, the fashion system in theory is not only preoccupied with these relationships but also, and more importantly, in producing a result.

goal

Is what comes out of the fashion system, perhaps, the source of anxiety that triggers Neo's desire to kill it ?

The first signs of fashion being organized around a system happened in the mid 19th century in Paris. At that time, fashion was a subject for excentrics and wealthy people. Most of what was produced relied on the work of couturiers that in any sense resemble the fashion designers we know today, with clothes being produced and created based mostly on the client's personal taste and some kind of general sense of style. **Streets** and popular parades were the **place to look at garments**. There was not the idea of a **brand** or a designer's name behind the production of clothes. Production of clothes was not a centralized large scale activity. Fashion was, in fact, a luxury for few.

Around 1870, Frederick C. Worth, a british couturier based in Paris, designed a business model that centralized all the scattered components of the still scarce fashion production at that time in one single place: the couture house. This space became the place of production, creation and, most important, looking at clothes. Worth was the first to propose a kind of performance – a fashion show – where female fashion models were parading presenting the recent garments to possible clients. For the first time since its advent, fashion and all its ephemeral components where organized as an ordered and controlled structure of production, and fashion shows became the place where this model took form (Teunissen, 2006).

Between 1900 and 1917, Worth's business model arrive to the US with many parisian designers exporting their collections and presenting fashion shows

origin catwalk

abroad. However, huge changes modified this model as it reached the american market: as americans are more interested in selling in a larger scale, they modify the way fashion shows were presented by bringing the fashion productions into department stores, opening its doors to a more middle class/popular crowd and turning it into a marketing spectacle for buyers and journalists. In order to absorb this new spectacle format and to showcase more clothes at once, they modified the physical structure of the fashion shows, **placing the fashion models on an elevated base with enough length to accomodate a large number of models.** This pseudo –pedestal remains as the norm until today: the **catwalk**.

The shift from the european to american market represents a shift that defines the core of fashion today: from a tool of social mediation intimately connected to artists, excentrics, and creators, to an industrial model that is at service of economic interests and global spectacle – **a system of production of money.**



Viktor & Rolf say "We love fashion, but it's going so fast. We wanted to say 'No' this season..."

In 1967, the sociologist Roland Barthes became the first to propose a systematization of fashion in his book *The Fashion System*, a work on semiotics focused on the construction semantics of fashion magazines. His method was mostly influenced by Karl Marx's idea of a model of production, distribution, and consumption that would extend not only to social and economic institutions but also to dimensions of social life such as art and culture (Carter, 2003):

- **Production** as what guarantees the production of things;
- **Distribution** as what ensures that these products will reach the right buyers;
- **Consumption** as how the products are used by the final buyers;

Barthes attributed different meanings to each of these categories, by relating them to a sub-division of clothes in three distinct garments: The real garment, the represented garment, and the used garment:

- The real garment, in relation to production, is the garment as it is: a piece of clothing that has specific technological qualities of materials, size, shape. It is an object before it becomes an objectified image or desire.
- The represented garment, in relation to distribution, is the garment associated to a created image. Barthes does an analysis on how the texts on fashion

magazines describe a piece of clothing and how the actual piece is photographed. This object, or image-clothing as he calls it – is a representation of the real garment, not the real garment anymore. It is a changed, modified, appropriated superficial image of the technological process that generated the real garment. The represented garments (the photographed image with a text) is not a real representation of a real garment in relation to its material qualities. Instead, it is a representation constructed through words and images.

- The used garment, in relation to consumption, is actually the way the represented garment is used by the final buyers, how it is seen in the streets and how, obviously, its final image is dissociated and opposed to the imaginary and constructed universe of the represented garment within the media. Barthes's theory of fashion system considers the modern system of fashion as the catalyst of *the transformation of clothing from a simple technological object into something rich in symbolism* (Carter, 2003)- **a system of production of meanings.**

There is, however, a contradictory within Barthes's model. According to Barthes, there are two categories of systems within this system of meanings. One is an open system, freed from any ideology or symbolic constructions. He refers to a more "aristocratic" media/audience such as the ones who are invited to fashion shows. These characters are above the popularization of fashion through mass culture, and most of what they identify as images lies on the fashion world itself; The other system is a closed one that is directed towards the popular crowds that are outside the fashion world. This system utilizes images and text to define a behaviour, *a modus operandi in which the masses need to operate in order to participate in the game of fashion* (Monneyron, 2006).

The first signs of systematization in fashion points out to a system of production of goods and profit. Barthes's system of meanings produces an unreal image of an object (a garment) which is intended to attract, persuade, seduce and, as a consequence, generate revenue. Both systems work for the money.

The fashion system has been regarded as one concerned about the production of money, and willing to morph into many shapes in order to achieve its goal. Some researchers, however, describe the existence of other forms of

Anti-Fashion, by Social Distortions

*You are so plastic you could be a
Barbie Doll.
You walk and you talk just like them
all.
And, Oh how I love those pretty
little curls,
With shoes and skirts, who's the
better girl?
Chorus:
Anti-Fashion take them off
Anti-Fashion
And where did you get those \$100
pants?
You know I'd love to rip them up, to
shreds
A shiny red sports car takes you to
the mall,
You shop with the elite and com-
pare them all*



systems that might indicate fashion's tendency for the **production of anything**, no matter what, in order to maintain its existence, no matter what. Researcher Anneke Smelik (2006), for instance, proposes fashion as a system of meanings inserted in a postmodern context of production of images just for the sake of it, in a world completely controlled and monopolized by the media. Others such as Frederic Godart , profesor of Organizational Behaviour at INSEAD, published an article at the Internatinoal Journal of Fashion Studies (2014) about the power of structure of fashion industry defined by a geographic system. According to Godart, cities like Paris, New York, Milan and London are located in a multi-level imaginary and symbolic socio-economic space, becoming a place where people, objects, and information flow together freely. These geographic scenarios constitute the perfect environment for fashion to renew itself. In *The Field of Fashion Materialized: A Study of London Fashion Week*, researchers Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora (2006) introduce the strata system that exists within the physical spaces of fashion shows as determinant in keeping its status quo as the materialization of fashion system at large.

As we identify fashion system not as one entity but rather **as systems that retrofeed from each other while keeping their individuality** - sometimes producing money, sometimes producing smoke - can we actually frame this model within a General Theory of Fashion System ?

2.5. conclusion: a system of everything

The answer to the previous question is "no". A General Theory of Fashion System would fall under the category of Fashion Studies, which is still today an academic field that is under scrutiny and misunderstanding from inside and outside of fashion as a discipline. The difficulty resides exactly on the complexity of subject: on the many forms fashion can take, on the way clothes have become/disappeared/become again the subject of study, how fashion is subject to abstract relations, economic flunctuations, temporality, meanings and, most importantly, how most of its variables are subject to ephemeral forces.

A better and perhaps more logical way of thinking would consider fashion system as a system of production that is formed by many individual and interrelated systems whose absolute intention is to keep fashion's existence no matter what: a **system of everything** that encompasses **many players**

(television, newspaper, magazines, models, fashion designers, stores, internet, museums, galleries, critics, bloggers, consumers, artists), **many industries** (textiles, accesories, art, music, film, media in general), **many cities** (Paris, NY, London, Milan as ahead in the game), **many formats** (there are about 120 fashion weeks/year globally). An all encompassing scenario where fashion becomes real.

Neo's provocation against fashion system is in essence an attempt against everything that maintain, sustains, and feeds fashion globally, from the way clothes are produced to the way the fashion machine works in producing money; it is a incitation on rapid trends, on fast fashion, on seduction, on consumption; a superficial critic on fashion as a producer of desire, images, standardization, status, waste, criativity, beauty, identity, new genders, bodies, experiences and, again, money. The problem, however, is that the voice that screams " Gianfranco Ferré is not dead. The fashion system is " is just a loud voice whose sound does not go beyond the glass box of the windowshop. It does not affect, neither critic or incite the system that actually is a participant in this semantic play. If Neo exists, it does so with the consent of the subject that it provokes.

So, what happens in Neo is not, and it was never designed to be a provocation. **If fashion can be everything, it can also be what is against itself. All anti-fashion, for instance, is fashion in the process of becoming fashionable.** Every year we see how collections come and go, how styles appear and disappear, in a sort of representation of life, death, and ressurection. This process is inherent to fashion condition as a discipline eager for constant renewal, and if the fashion system is dead it just means that at some point it will **raise again, and again, and again.**

Just like fashion itself.

anti-fashion = fashion

life

death

ressurrection

continuum

Chicks on Speed - Fashion Rules!

*you fashion people in your camouflage wear
you think you're really quite up there
but the fashions you wear aren't so cool
you really should go back, you're old school
and martin hides behind our stripes
the t-shirts yeah! that's what she likes
nicking off with logos at cartier
the grand mister d, or charly, some say*

*fashion is for fashion people
it's hard to be cool if you don't follow these rules
fashion is for fashion people
get out there now and break the rules*

*dress-up dummies for a little while
crashed the crash party in real chicks style
karl and his lens they like to watch
king of the thing
but we dont give a.....
gucci's got the monopoly
fifty handbags - thats victim's luxury
vogued in 01, enough of that fake, it's said and
done*

*fashion is for fashion people
it's hard to be cool if you don't follow these rules
fashion is for fashion people
get out there now and break the rules*

*bless your dress, you're out of style
you're a brainwash victim for a while
off with their heads is what we say
after marie antoinette it's the only way*

*you're a model and you walk the beat
they even told you what to eat
bacteria inbred in fashion schools
get out there now and break the rules*

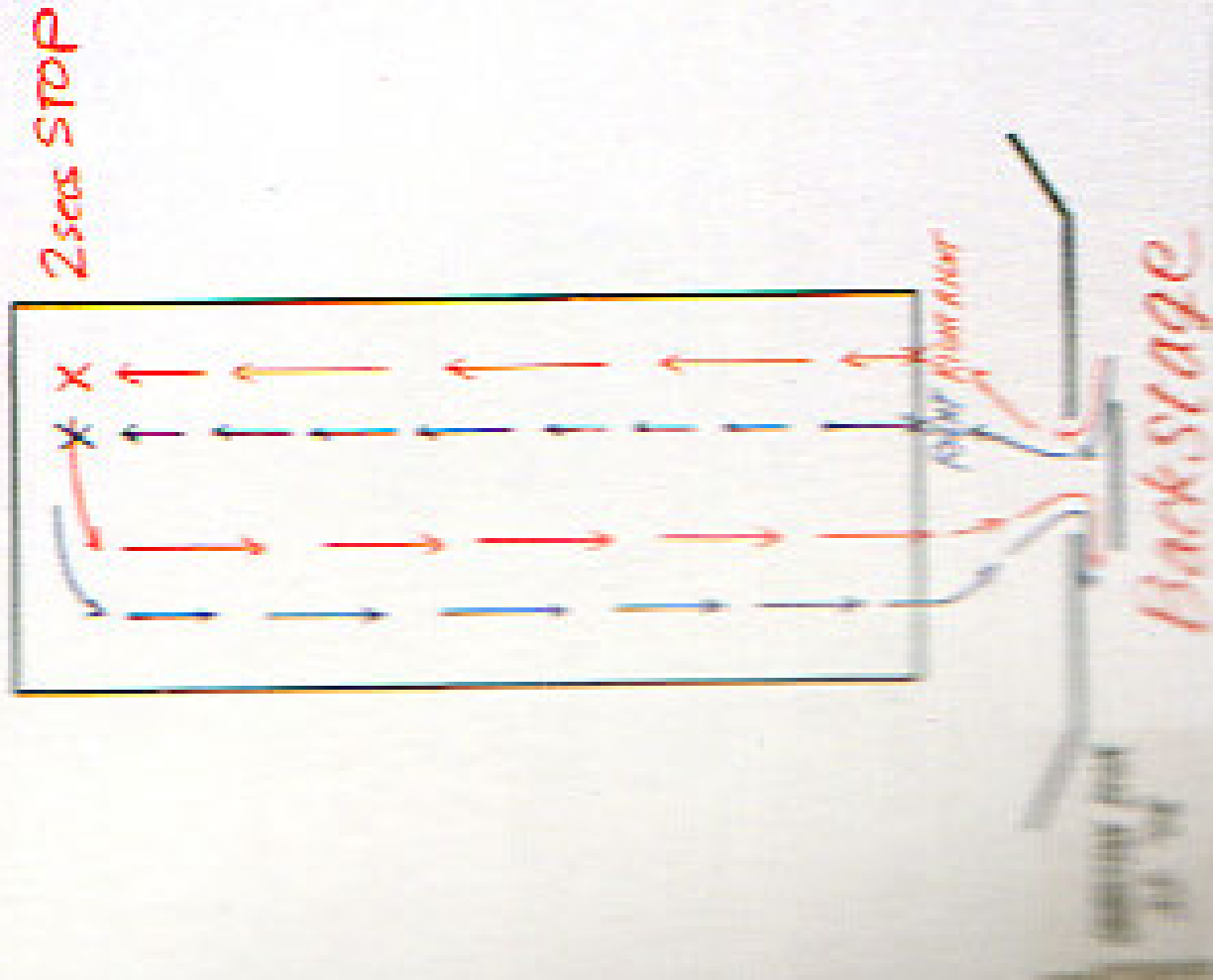
*fashion is for fashion people
it's hard to be cool if you don't follow these rules
fashion is for fashion people
get out there now and break the rules*

*fashion.....fashion.....
its hard
ahhhhhhhhhh*



3. DEFINING THE CATWALK AS A SYSTEM: FROM FASHION TO VARIABLES

CAMERAS



- Walk straight out No STOP
- As DIRECTED, Walk just RIGHT side of center OR RIGHT RIGHT (more Right) side of center of the runway.
- Make a 2sec STOP, 3m from the end of the runway.
- Return on the other side, still CLOSE TO CENTER, RIGHT or RIGHT RIGHT side.
- Exit to backstage on your Right.
- FINALE: Walk on the CENTER of the runway and Exit on the LEFT side.

If you only have one chance, SO Make it Right!!



HIPSTER or HOMELESS?

USE MAGIC MARKERS TO MAKE THE MAN ON THE RIGHT INVISIBLE TO SOCIETY!



SECRET HINT: While both hipsters and hobos share a mutual appreciation for beards, old clothing, and dirt, most hipsters give themselves away via their unwavering commitment to color coordination.

ColoringForGrownups.com

Fig. 01

we have the information

We have been educated in Fashion terms for the past decades, and we have learned our lessons well: we buy clothes that are sold in stores all over, we look like each other although maintaining certain individuality, and we are even capable of identifying all fashion's fluctuations, knowing exactly when and how to mix the 70's and the 80's in order to become a whatever we want.

Let's say you decide to be a hipster³: you have to not only dress as one but you act as one. You go to hipsters places, usually the latest and coolest ones; you eat hipster food, usually some kind of organic fusion cuisine; you read hipsters magazines, usually some kind of large format with glossy pictures of other hipsters in fashionable attitude; an attitude that, in fact, transmits the idea of being fashionable while pretending to be "anti-fashion": the vintage clothes as well as the whole recyclable and artsy environment in which hipsters are inserted have nothing to do with –at least superficially– Fashion's mass production and thirst for newness. Quite the opposite, being hipster means to change newness for nowness. To live the present while dressed as if in the past. (Fig. 01)

As we look at the evolution of contemporary hipster culture, however, some facts emerge: first, the origin of hipster movement was in the 40's, as a form of ideological rebellion against the current social system at that time. The word "hipster", in fact, comes from "hip" or "hep", which are derivations of the African word "hepi", that means to "open one's eyes".

Being a hipster was never about fashion or having a designed lifestyle.

The contemporary *homo hipster*, as autonomous as they think they are, is the constructed image of a phenomena that started in the end of the 20th century, when the idea of a humankind concerned about environmental issues (mostly

3. "The whole point of hipsters is that they avoid labels and being labeled. However, they all dress the same and act the same and conform in their non-conformity. Doesn't the fact that there is a hipster look go against all hipster beliefs? Hipsters are supposed to hate anything mainstream or trendy.

But the look has gone mainstream -- tweens all over America, from the suburbs to cities, from public schools to prep schools are trying hard to be hipsters. There are definitely hipster, or hipster imposters, who roam the streets of New York City with that iconic carefully created sloppy vintage look. Would the real hipsters argue that these imposters just have the look but not the right values? What happens when American Apparel stores outnumber Gap stores in New York City and blogging about music, photos, or cooking becomes lucrative? Have hipsters won or merely defeated themselves?"

This post-modern, anti-consumerism era is just beginning, but the role of the hipster in this age is over."

PLEVIN Julia, Who is a Hipster ? article at www.huffingtonpost.com



Chloé Sevigny and friends

Fig. 02

triggered by the current updates about our environmentally fucked up condition) emerged within Fashion as a sustainable and ethical industry . The system responded quickly with a series of actions (still very slow but ongoing) *that reconsidered materiality and fabrication into account as a more responsible practice* (Fogg, 2013) but also, and above all, they considered a new way of thinking (according to fashion's parameter, of course).

Fashion's good heart flourishes and, with it, a humanist-ecological trend: humans concerned about earth and, more importantly, about recycling and reusing. It was time to reconsider a sensibility that would bring art and creativity into play, through a new generation well informed and prepared to live a simple and productive life where one does what one loves the most (work becomes pleasure) while respecting the environment.

It was time to open one's eye again and to create the youth of the new century.

vintage

In the end of the 90s, Vintage⁴ became a fashion trend that neglected mainstream fashion in favor of a more individual expression. In the 2000s, *to wear vintage was to mark oneself out as a connoisseur and fashion individualist* (Mendes, 2010).

catwalk

The first image of a *Homo Hipsters Contemporaneous* was found exactly at that same period, within the catwalk space of a now extinct brand called Imitation of Christ, that started designing their collections around the reuse and appropriation of old (vintage) clothes. Their fashion shows were simple and financially cheap performances (not spectacles) that were openly spreading a discourse against the fashion system: in one of them, fashion models were seated on chairs while the audience had to walk down the runway. Chloé Sevigny, the american actress known for her sometimes outrageous and "against the hollywood system" roles, became the co-creative director of the brand. She brought her friends into the scene – all adopting the vintage artsy look and all assiduous of the most trendy places in New York - and the rest...is history: The media was quick to respond: Imitation of Christ's endeavour took them straight to the tents of Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in New York while Chloé Sevigny was occupying the front cover of super trendy fashion magazines such as V or W. (Fig. 02)

4. Retro, recently out of style with potential to make a comeback. In the late 1900's and early 2000's, vintage has become an adjective used as a powerful marketing tool to increase the implied value of an item and increase its profitability when sold. (www.urbandictionary.com)



Rick Owens Fall/Winter 2013/2014 Fashion Show



Rick Owens 's same look in the street

Fig. 03

The hipster phenomena highlights a condition that has been inherent to Fashion since its advent. As designers and the industry idealize their concepts, the catwalk becomes **the only real place where all ideas** (from clothing design to conceptualization) **can be put into practice as a whole strategic construct.** In fact, all fashion's attributes that we commonly associate with it such as desire, image, spectacle, production, fashion models, supermodels, luxury, exclusive, seduction and so forth, are ideological positionings built within the space of the catwalk. **Fashion, as the social phenomena we know today, did not exist before the fashion shows.**

unity (strategy) + pieces = system

When the collection leaves the runway, all this strategy dissolves in the air into different and sometimes uncontrollable particles: as clothes are hang on stores, they become immobilized objects dissociated from a conceptual context. As clothes are photographed in magazine spreads, they become flat images inserted in a moment frozen in time that in nothing reseambles the free flow of bodies moving on the catwalk. As we wear them in the street, they fade away among the crowd with no backdrop to detach them from reality. The whole concept is fragmented, and the only thing left is the identity of the brand itself.

(Fig. 03)

representation
catwalk
photography
magazine

Still each particle maintains the integrity of the concept in relation to the presentation it took place in the catwalk: although a vintage dress in itself does not represent being a hipster, the imaginary constructed in the catwalk (and later exhaustly reproduced and manipulated by the media) immediately builds a visual lexicon that serves to identify that individual as part of a group; the frozen image in the magazine – mostly influenced by what was photographed and seen on the catwalk - is nothing more than a thumbnailed representation of a hypotheticalal space where hipsters exist.

If we turn back time, we see the same phenomena taking place in its roots. The first fashion shows, at the end of the 19th century, were the territory in which the ideal fashionable body and the first designed collection came into being (as well as the birth of the fashion system), introducing the image of the “modern woman” as a sort of analogic copy and paste reproduction of the parisian burgeois woman now dressed to modernity (Evans, 2013). This new woman became **a model to be followed, a rule to be respected.**



Chanel Spring/Summer 2012

Fig. 04

gender
diversity

The catwalk has also become a place where modern archetypes – from the first super models to the anorexic girl, also including the liberated sexual woman, the uncloseted gay and, more recently, the transgender male/female models – are introduced as “the other” bodies circumscribed in the large array of gender and social behaviours within the fashion industry.

In recent years, the discussion about fashion shows has been around their relevance in the business as many other forms of communication have emerged, especially in the A.W. (after web) years. Some consider it an old fashioned way of presenting clothes as fashion films have slowly become a trend, while others just think it is too expensive to keep up with the game.

However, this is a onefold situation: **to question the catwalk’s unecessity is to deny its importance as the only moment when Fashion truly exists as a complete materialized system, compressing all aspects of clothing creation (design, production, image, body, behaviour, concept, environment, ideology, just to name few) in one single moment of space-time-action.** (Fig. 04)

According to Rivière (1998), Fashion cannot just disappear: it has to become something else in order to fulfill the emptiness left behind. If the catwalk disappears, it means that Fashion has long desintegrated.

3.2. a system in formation

catwalk
shift
conceptual configuration

As we still identify Fashion as a determinant agent in fabricating most of we understand as pop culture today, the current discussion about fashion shows’s relevance might frame a moment when these spatial constructs are not becoming irrelevant but, instead, **are in a process of shapeshifting into a new conceptual configuration**, just as they have done in the past .

This possibility seems to indicate two necessary conditions:

space-time

a) the catwalk is an active participant in the Fashion System’s existence, as some sort of decisive space-time moment of a larger production plan that defines fashion’s trends and shifts;

b) the catwalk is able to transform/adapt/morph/evolve in time while maintaining its structural integrity: after more than a century, we still see fashion models walking down the runway showing the new collection, in an idealized spatial container that puts together media, critics, and avid fashionistas under the same roof.



Backstage of a fashion show

Fig. 05

The idea of the catwalk being a kind of active organism capable of adapting itself to Fashion's conditions has to consider a shift from its understanding as a place for looking at clothes to an organizational construct that has evolved in time around a set of pre-defined but flexible rules intended to guarantee fashion system's longevity . Such definition coincides with the definition of a *system as a set of interrelated elements* (Ackoff, 1972) that *are dynamically interacted and organized in relation to a goal* (Rosnay, 1995). (Fig. 05)

To consider a “ catwalk as a system “ implies the recognition of basic requirements inherent of a general definition of systems: 1. it exists within an **environment** with which it relates; 2. this relation happens through its own **boundary**: real or imaginary; 3. the existence of **components** (fixed or variable) within the boundary that articulate and permeate the play between inside and outside:

This recognition will be divided in a two – part strategical approach, being one the definition of each requirement (environment, boundary, and components) in relation to the systems and framed within the catwalk parameters; and the other being the identification of plausible systems they have generated.

3.2.1. part one: system requirements

3.2.1.1. environment of the catwalk in relation to systems

reading reality

Fashion as a social construct has been mostly defined by its direct influence in modern society through its synergy with what happens in the streets, in music, in economy, in politics, in gender and so forth. Fashion is intrinsically a condition that feeds from everything that happens. So, to determine its environment is to consider all that surrounds it and that can trigger either changes or novelty within fashion itself.

As the systematic definition of **environment** defines it as being a structure composed of all the things that surround the system, and it includes *everything that may affect the system and that may be affected by the system* (Banathy, 1997), this research will consider the catwalk environment as all the general outside forces(social, cultural, political, economical, technological, etc) that have contributed to the spatial and conceptual structuralization of the catwalk as we know it today.



The World Cup 2014 Trophy was carried in a Louis Vuitton bag, taken into the stadium by brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen

Fig. 06

3.2.1.2. boundary of the catwalk in relation to systems

A boundary separates the system from its environment and works as an interface through which exchanges with the same (inputs, outputs) take place (François, 2004).

interface

The catwalk's boundary cannot be its wall or any physical obstacle that marks its perimeter: although a physical boundary separates/connects it with its environment, it does not exchange inputs and outputs with it. A wall or any physical element is part of the architecture of the place and occupies its position as a component (will be discussed later). Also, the environment in which the fashion system is inserted is one that deals with subjective non-material issues (social and cultural interactions, politics, gender issues, etc...).

physical

architecture

brand

What is being proposed here is the understanding of boundary in more abstract terms by introducing the concept of the brand⁵ – Chanel, Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton, among many - as the invisible interface that filters the information from the outside (environment) and turns it into maleable components of action (a physical space and an action through time). A brand encompasses an entity with a recognizable identity (the contemporary traditionality of Chanel, the sexual Gucci, the modernist Prada, for example) that is capable of identifying elements in its environment that can work as catalyst for the interactions that happen within the catwalk space. The brand, subjective to branding as a marketing strategy, wants to tell a story. (Fig. 06)

3.2.1.3. components of the catwalk in relation to systems

entity x identity

Some systemists say that a system is, in most of the cases, *the sum of its components* (François, 2004). They are often an integral part of a system, chosen mostly for its potential to carry out functions necessary to achieve the system's goal.

The identification of possible components within the catwalk space is not a difficult task, as they have remained the same since the first fashion model set foot inside of the visual labyrinth of fashion that is the catwalk:

5. brand is the name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's product distinct from those of other sellers. It is also the process in which a mark, usually a symbol or ornamental pattern, is burned into the skin of a living person, with the intention that the resulting scar makes it permanent (UrbanDictionary)



Fashion models were designed to be a controlled anything

Fig. 07

action	• the action (as the body moves the object-clothes) ;
space	• a designed space where the action happens;
times	• a period of many times (a schedule, a season, a duration) in which the action takes place inside of the space;

Catwalk – as the grouping of space, action , and time – plays a decisive role within the fashion industry as it serves to materialize and trigger all the friction (and sometimes penetrations) that happen between environment and boundary (the brand). The catwalk's unified structure of space-time-action functions to combine, separate, or compare the inputs (perceived by the boundary) to produce outputs (results), through the many variations and negotiations between physicality, energy, and temporality.

The catwalk, as the synergy of many intentions, is a place for the production of energy in time: An energy that is produced by a walking body that animates a lifeless object inside of a designed spatial configuration.

event	Considering that this object (clothes), just like any object, is <i>a visual concept with no independent physical existence, it can only exist if it becomes an event.</i> (François, 2004). The parading, as the event that animates the object, is at the same time progenitor and guardian of a new kind of human body. This body - the model - does not exist outside of this configuration, as its only life mode requires clothes to be an extension of their skin (McLuhan, 1965), in a sort of second permanent material placenta that never slips away.
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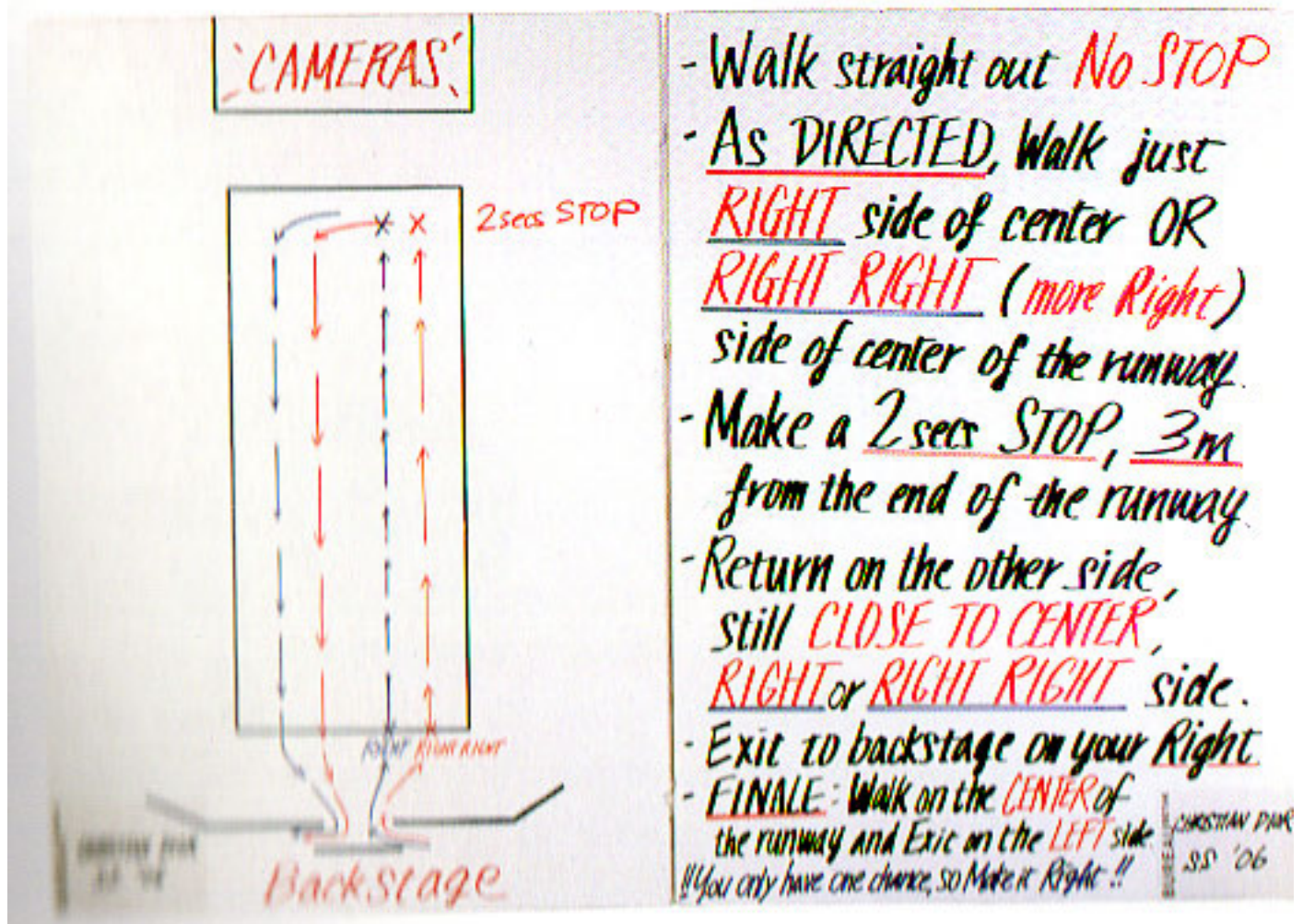
If the model is an object, what animates it ?

models	Fashion models were designed to be a controlled anything. They are an ever-changing body that has adopted many if not infinite formats (from real bodies to digital ones, from superbodies to altered ones), but more importantly, have remained young and fresh, and they do exactly what they are told to. (Fig. 07)
--------	--

clothes	The model and the clothes, or the model as clothing, is the corporate and fabricated materialization of the act of getting dressed as a social ritual. One that, according to Meleau-Ponty (1976) is situated in a space-time condition: as we get dressed, we orient ourselves to a specific situation and we act accordingly. It is, as Ponty points out, the visible form of our intentions.
---------	---

The fashion model is, many occasions, a human being. Once it is undressed, it goes back to its original state.

These entities – the model body and the clothes as an animated body – is defined in the studies of systems as the two-body problem: it concerns the deterministic interaction of two bodies reciprocally related through a simple causal interdependence (François, 2004). One needs the other - both are “lifeless” things.



The whole event lasts 17 minutes

Fig. 08

body	As the model passes by, the space where the action takes place becomes the <i>medium in which energy and time expenditures are opposed</i> (François, 2004). A space that, just like the model, does not exist without the action and does not exist if not in action: from the first fashion shows in the 19th century
models / clothes	until now, this space has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a merry-go-round scheme of constant novelty and spectacle, that has appropriated any possible typology (visual and spatial) in order to conceive the demands of the industry. Just like the models, the space constitutes a component whose materiality is designed to always change and to adapt. And, just like the models and the clothes, it is a structure that needs to be mediated in order to exist.
space	
action	
time	
light	The energy exchange between action and space happens continuously. The dressed body determines its temporality at the same time that gives a meaning for existence. The space triggers the action through light, music, and a path to be followed (the catwalk itself). A spatial configuration can displace this body vertically, diagonally, and elevate it. The dressed body, on the other hand, articulates the flow of focal points within the space.
music	
path	
duration	The space of the catwalk is the media in which action and time colide: a model enters the catwalk. 10 seconds after, the second one comes. Each model takes about one minute to conclude its trajectory . The whole events lasts an average of 17 minutes (the first fashion shows were 1 hour and 30 minutes long). (Fig. 08)
collection	The models showcase a collection that is always in the future – spring/ summer 2015 is presented in 2014 – but that already exists in the present – you see it, it is in front of you. Because it exists already, it becomes past. The space, in this sense, becomes a time machine that reveals past and future as only imaginary dimensions where the sensible experience of the observer (the audience) interprets it as reality.
interdependancy	Inside the boundaries of the catwalk, one component cannot exist without the other. Each is dependant from the other, it influences the other, and one being more proeminent might signify the diminishing of the other. Departing from this premise, the analysis of the components will consider their interdependancy and their capacity to change/adapt as the determinant factor that defines them as variables.

DIAGRAM REPRESENTATION OF ACTION WITHIN THE CATWALK

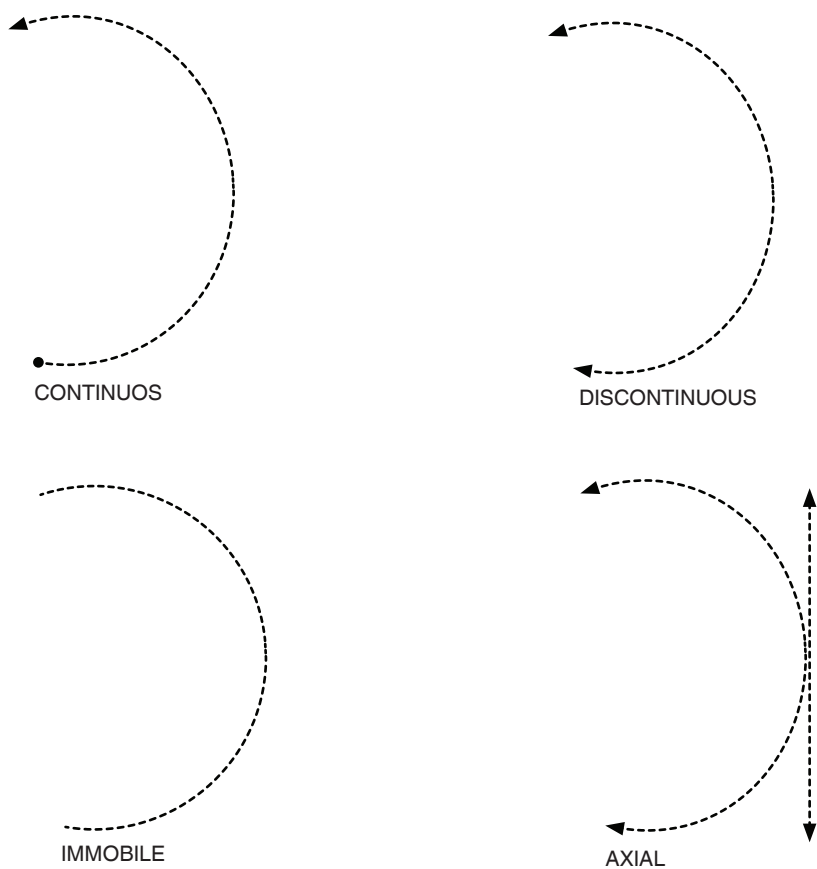


Fig. 09

OBJECT AND BODY DIAGRAM REPRESENTATION WITHIN ACTION

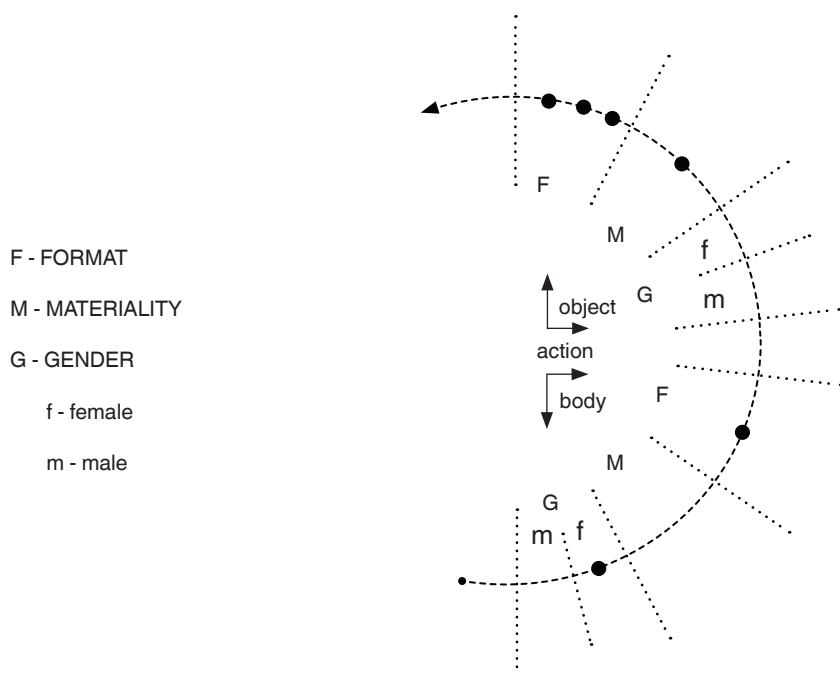


Fig. 10

3.2.2. part two: plausible systems - production, representation, and image

This research will propose Fashion as being an entity initially structured around three system that appeared in different moments in fashion's history from mid 19th century until now. They are accumulative systems (One does not substitute the other. Instead, they all coexist although sometimes one might be more prominent than the other) and define three distinct shifts within the industry. Each of these systems will be structured according to the elements that form a system (environment, boundary, and components). For specific and important moments, a diagram will be proposed as to situate the phenomena within systematic boundaries of interpretation, allowing for visual comparison between systems and/or moments. These diagrams are introductory investigations and visual possibilities as to generate other forms of representation from the fusion of fashion and data. They are initial explorations on how to diagrammatically represent the catwalk through information.

The diagrams as well as specific moments within the texts (indicated on the left side of each text) will be structured according to each of the system's parts:

- a) environment will be represented by $E(x)$ as x being the moment or event that highlights an important shift. For example, $E(\text{social})$ relates to a social aspect of the environment that affected that specific moment;
- b) boundary will be represented by Bd and points to moments where the brand is relevant to that specific moment;
- c) each component will be considered as an independent entity and will named/numbered individually:

- action will be represented by $A(x)$ as x being an event that highlights an important shift, particular categorization and/or chronology subject to variations in: discontinuous movement(walking in no specific manner, dancing, performing), constant movement (repetitive walking), no movement, and axial movement (up, down, sideways, diagonal); (Fig. 09)

- Body and object will be represented by $B(x)$ and $O(x)$ as x being the moment or event that highlights an important shift. For example, $B(\text{female})$ relates to the importance of the female body to that specific moment. A $O(\text{collection})$, for example, relates to the important of the collections in that specific moment. Diagrammatically, body and object will be subdivided in three categories: Format (size, length, etc...), Materiality, and Gender; (Fig. 10)

DIAGRAM REPRESENTATION OF SPACE WITHIN THE CATWALK

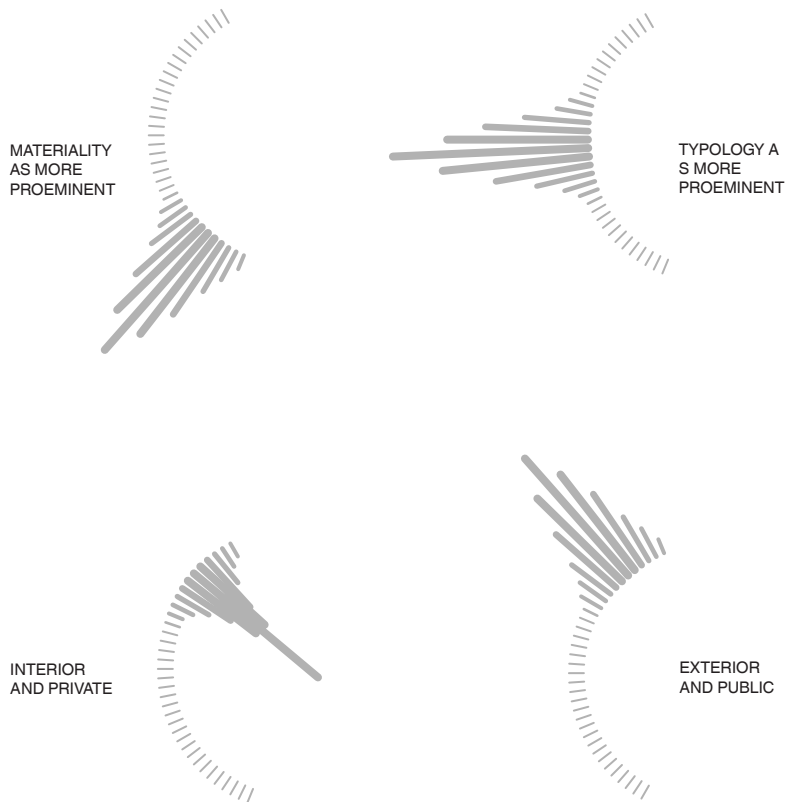


Fig. 11

DIAGRAM REPRESENTATION OF TIME WITHIN THE CATWALK

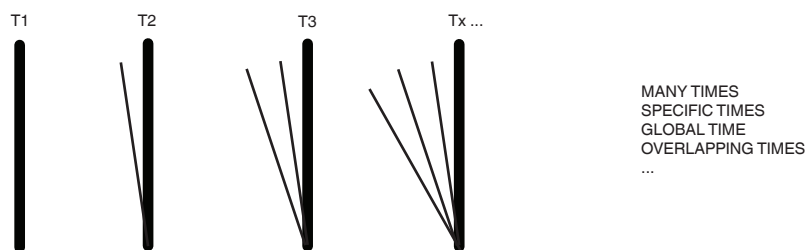


Fig. 12

COMPONENTS WITHIN THE BOUNDARY - SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION

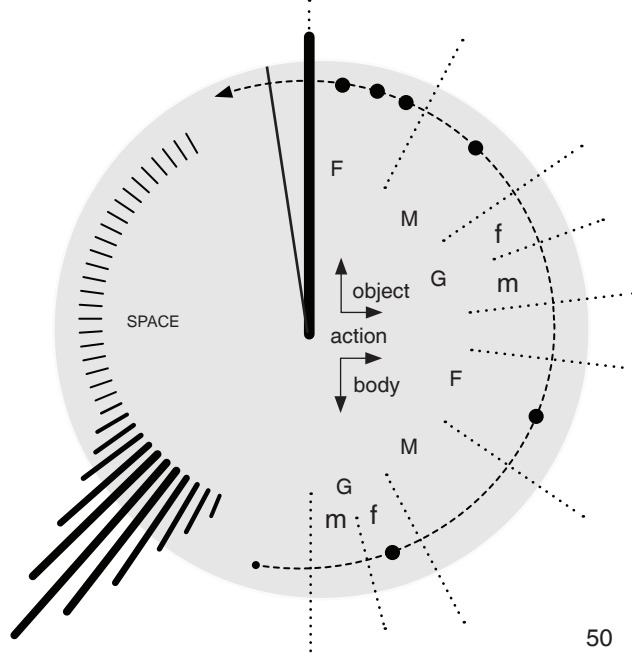


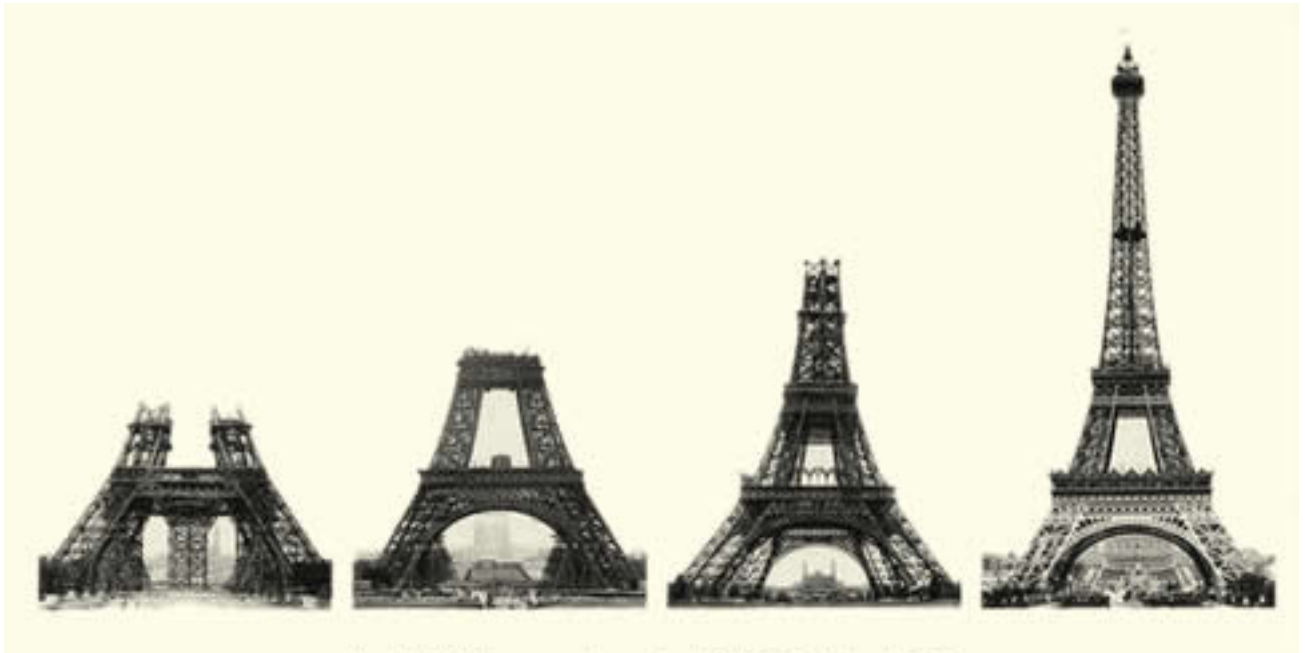
Fig. 13

- Space will be represented by $S(x)$ as x being the moment or event that highlights an important shift. For example, $S(\text{catwalk})$ relates to importance of the catwalk (either its appearance or typological change) in specific moment. Diagrammatically, space will be subdivided in three categories: Materiality, Typology, and Public/Private; (Fig. 11)

- Time will be represented by $T(x)$ as x being the moment or event that highlights an important shift. Because fashion has not one but many Times, this specific component will be indicated in the diagram/text according to how it evolves within the system. It could be indicated as $T(1)$ as initial time, or $T(2)$ as seasons. It all depends on the situation and typology, and it will be indicated through explanatory legends. (Fig. 12)

3.2.2.1. from 1870 – 1910 : system of production

consume	In Paris, at the end of the 19th century, there was an occidental democratic society, a new social class, that was still fascinated by the freedom conquered after the French revolution and preluded by the Industrial one. / As this bourgeois mid-class was set free, a new market emerged fulfilling the desires of a group eager for consumption: Le Bon Marché, known as the first department store of the modern world, opens in Paris in 1852 as a place destined
audience	for a new audience of consumers, mostly low class individuals now attracted by the offer of industrial work and money-making prospects (Marchetti, 2009). / Consumerism becomes life itself, encroaching all its commercial and production values in all aspects of the social. / In the other side of the
mass production	ocean, US's Fordism was still developing a line of automobile production and a way of thinking that would define standardization and mass production as a possible model, if not the only possible one in a global economy hungry for novelty, velocity, and technology, as if believing in a progress that had to keep the body going: moving platforms and rollercoaster were also created at the same period.
body in motion	Marey's photographs of the human body as well as the first experiments in cinema set the human body in motion and, more importantly, a body dressed to be seen in movement. / In arts, avant-gardism presents as a resistance against the new bourgeois scenario, with many artists refusing to adapt to



Glimpses of modernity - Eiffel Tower x Etienne Marey's photographs - Production x Movement

Fig. 14

a system preoccupied in selling and popularizing art as goods. Avant-garde becomes a refuge, an interiorized place of manifest against a sort of social construct based on mass production. It becomes a place for experimentation and, to a certain extent, intellectual exclusiveness. / The 19th century sees the birth of the study of a general theory of systems: the concept of a “system” in the natural sciences was introduced by the French physicist Nicolas Léonard Sadi Carnot. (Fig. 14)

body urban visions

The body – especially the female one - leaves the house and goes to the street , now moving in a different pace. The birth of railway and the automobile move this individual even faster, turning velocity and physical displacement into a referential and necessity that moves the society away from the past - a modern condition. / This free individual, mentally and physically, conquered the streets eager to show him/herself new persona. The social life in Paris through its cafés, boulevards, and parks, were determinant in domesticating the eye to some sort of voyeurism that **found in clothes a place of manifestation**. The streets became the witness of a new type of flaneuse, called *passant*, a more generic and fruitful type of individual that was a real and unreal at the same time: the female that is described in literature (as a *flaneuse*) is the same that crosses the streets in real life (Evans, 2013).

sign of social status, individuality,
and modernity

Fashion was in demand. The new social class was getting dressed for modernity, after a long period when clothes were regulated by a code imposed in the monarchy. After the revolution, men and women were free to determine how to present themselves in society. There was a personal and visual need to be seen well dressed: a sign of social status, a sign of individuality, a sign of belonging to a modern moment. People were going to the racetracks to see horses running (the visualization of high speed) but also to look and be looked at: the layout of racetracks, with its large boulevards, became the scenario for parading and wondering around in clothes specifically designed for each costumer ,but still following a general style. / The figure of the couturier was not of a designer; instead, someone who would attend the client’s need, taste, and body conformity. Fashion was a decentralized activity mostly dictated by a client that had an opinion about what he/she wanted to wear. Most clothes were ordered, and the production of garments was a done in many if not hundreds of small and mid size tallers spread around Paris. Most couturiers were women. / Clothes were immobilized objects pinned up in dummies, a headless-no-arm-no-legs deformed female body that, interestingly enough, maintained butt and breasts intact. It is also interesting to note that there were no male dummies. While it is true that there was a female figure called De-

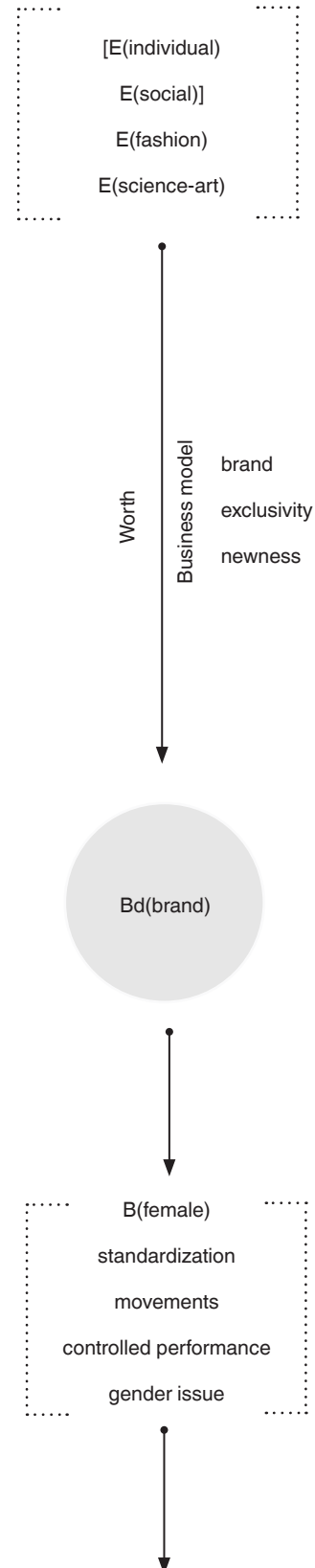


Top: a dummy

Fig. 15

Bottom: a fashion model

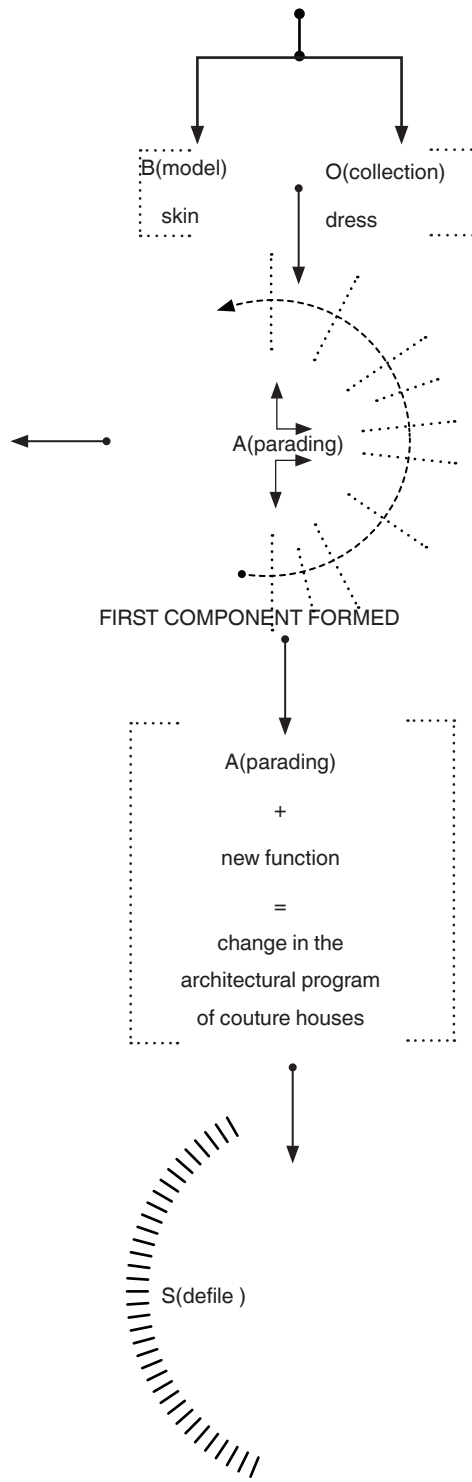
Fig. 16



moiselle (someone who would wear the clothes to clients, a pre-historic prototype of the fashion model), their work was restricted to the confined space of the tallers, with no walking involved: they were usually on top of some sort of pedestal, turning around an imaginary body axis, while couturiers and clients decided about the final garment design. (Fig. 15)

In 1865, an english business man and couturier called Frederick Charles Worth became the image of his own business: a male, heterosexual, white, high class individual that was circulating among the riches and the famous, was the first to come up with what is known today as a brand, by using not only his name (that eventually became a logo) but also proposing a model of production that created new and exclusive designs, moving away from the somehow stylistic game of personal taste that was dominant in Paris (and in the occidental world) at that time. Worth's idea of a brand as recipient of society's fashionable dreams reflects, to a certain extent, to how many fashion historians have referred to Worth – the modern man – as someone trying to become an artist (Evans, 2006) and, most importantly, as someone that came up with a modern art project of Gesamtkunstwerk or total work of art in fashion. / Worth introduced the new as exclusive, the new as the designed piece, and removed the figure of the opinionated client. He dictated a new law, coming from a moment in history where parisians were free to decide what to wear but had no idea what the image of modernity looked like. / Fashion became the projected image of oneself – Worth – in a sort of avatar transvested as a business model. With no place to exist as a modern idea, the old fragmented territory of fashion businesses with its many small tallers and submissive female couturiers was now embedded in a container that was Worth himself: a soft boundary, a sponge-like ephemeral organism that absorbed its surroundings necessities and modern aspirations. A conceptual body that only needed a place (physical and organic) to materialize: the Couture House.

Worth's business model first came into being through the idealization of a new way of showing and looking at clothes, in a kind of **performance** that involved women meticulously dressed, **walking through a series of controled movements** conveyed to express a kind of designed and desired modern femininity. Their movements were gracious and slow, as if living in a **non-gravitational** permanent state, and were intended for the better flow of garments while moving. (Evans, 2013) (Fig. 16)



SECOND COMPONENT FORMED

Estructuralization of the space as a
place of representation of reality
+
Estructuralization of the space as
the corporate place where to look at
clothes

The mechanization of women's movements turned them into a double layer fashionable object: they were dressed with the *fourreau*, a kind of dress/second skin that would cover her whole body, from neck to feet, hiding any traces of their appearance and leaving only heads and hands at sight. Later, they would wear the dress designed by Worth as the "real skin" and only desired object to be seen. The female body, now recognized as fashion model, became an animated integumentary system with clothes (as the object on focus) occupying a first outer skin where to look at. This second skin, or the clothes, was the first in its genre: called the Princess Line, it represents the beginning of what we understand today as collection, a series of dresses created by the fashion designer.

A body that was present but invisible.

typology

The Couture House was transformed. What was before a place for small and individualized orders, now became a centralized space of creation and production of clothes and, most importantly, a place for performances. Its **typology** had to be adapted in order to house a new function.

space

- The Defile Room, the added room, was an **interior and private space**, with **no windows** and no direct access from the street. Most of these rooms were decorated as interior bourgeois **domestic** places, with its walls covered in wood panels ornated in golden, with mirrors strategically placed in its perimeter. Chairs were placed in a semi-circular configuration as to allow models to swing by.

Defile Rooms were recognizable spaces. Snapshots of an existing domestic reality.

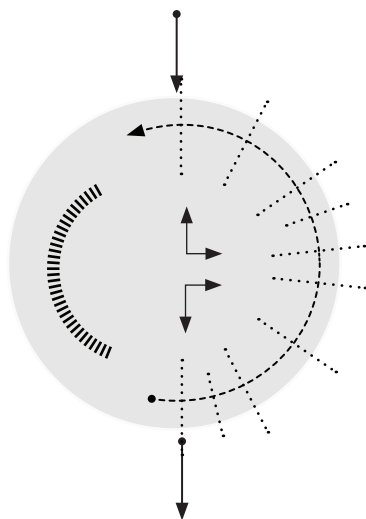
atmosphere

Parisian wealthy clients and international and local buyers were the first to witness how fashion was set in motion through the experience of space and body movements. / The audience was surrounded by the **atmosphere** created by the brand: the domestic configuration placed them in a familiar space while the model, a replica of the parisian woman, worked as the desired fashionable image of oneself detached from their (the clients) own body.

ritual

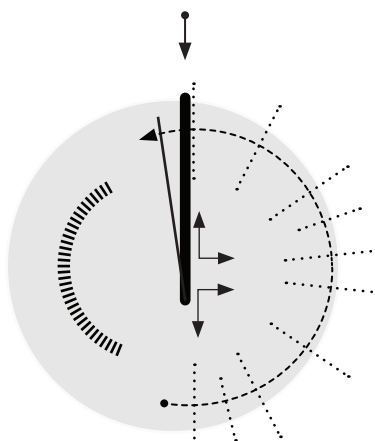
What was before just a matter of going to the street and look at the passant, now became a **ritual** of dressing up and behaving accordingly. Clients had to receive written invitation to come to the couture houses and had to be subject

Diagram representation of space and action

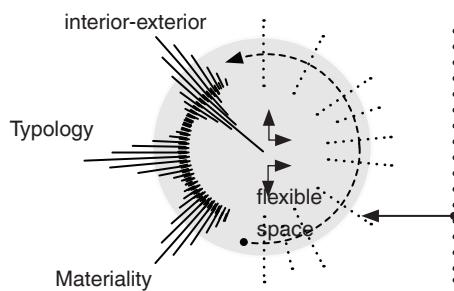
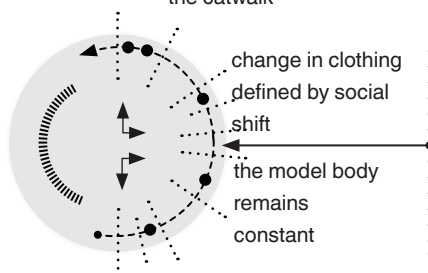


TIME TO SEE CLOTHES

THIRD COMPONENT FORMED



Diagrammatic representation of shifts within the catwalk



to a directed staged performance that was entirely coordinated and designed to impress. There was no space for opinion or for personal likes. All was conducted: there was a moment to look at the skirts, there was a moment to look at the hats. The client's gaze became the passive and submissive player in fashion's determinancy in defining the individual's fashionable image

The Defile Room was the first experiment in **immersive architecture** within fashion.

As the Couture Houses became factories of elegance, it became a place for routine. There was **a time to design, produce, and sell clothes**. Worth institutionalized time as a condition in which when to see the collection. Before, clients would come and go as they wish, depending on their needs. Now, there is a now: now as the authorized moment to see fashion, now as the official schedule, now as the moment when the brand, not the clients, is ready. / Within **the idea of now**, lies another layer of time associated with **duration**. Inside Worth's Couture House, fashion presentations would last 1 hours and 30 minutes with more or less 5 models presenting the whole selection of new garments. / Worth's success among all couture houses that adopted it as a format to follow as well as the growth of interest from international markets – especially the US - immensely influenced the creation of the La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture, the official french organism that organized the fashion calendar in two distinctive seasons - Fall/winter and Spring/summer – as to accommodate and order the flux of buyers and clients throughout the year. Fashion was institutionalized through time.

A time to see clothes. A duration. A calendar.

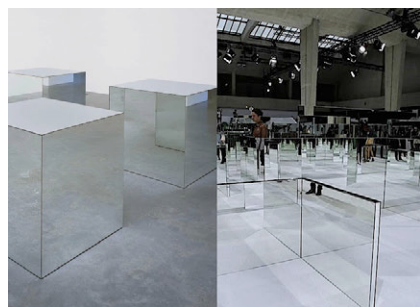
Women's dresses were adapted for the new modern woman: sports and outdoor activities defined radical changes in skirts and shirts. The bifurcated skirt, the practical dressing, and the shirtwaist set her body movements free.

The Belle Epoque defined an equally elegant men and women.

The institutionalization of couture houses defined one important shift in its spatial configuration: brands had to rethink their fashion presentation as to attract buyers and specialized media during the seasons. **The spaces had to become visually and typologically flexible in order to change its "aura" according to the collection's mood.**

"We are surrounded today, everywhere, all the time, by arrays of multiple, simultaneous images... The idea of a single image commanding our attention has faded away. It seems we need to be distracted in order to concentrate. As if we - all of us living in this new kind of space, the space of information - could be diagnosed en masse with Attention Deficit Disorder. The state of distraction in metropolis, described so eloquently by Walter Benjamin early in the twentieth century, seems to have been replaced by a new form of distraction, which is to say a new form of attention."

Beatriz Colomina, *Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture*

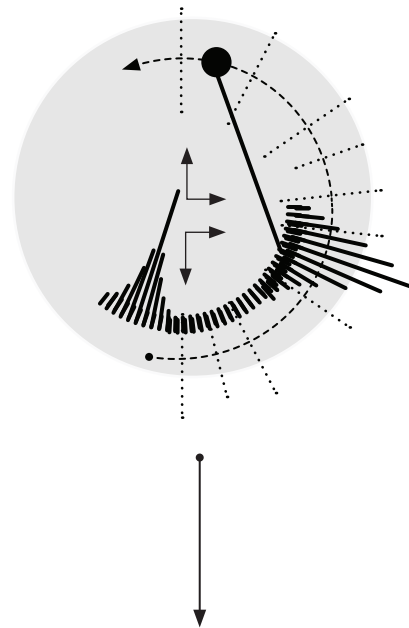


Left: Robert Morris, 1965

Right: 2014 Dior Homme fashion show

The mirror-image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world, if we go by the mirror disposition that the imago of one's own body presents in hallucinations or dreams, whether it concerns its individual features, or even its infirmities, or its object-projections; or if we observe the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearances of the double, in which psychical realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested.

Jacques Lacan, *The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience*



An interior flexible space which adopts a materiality that is prominent among the other components within the general diagram of the catwalk;

The material affects directly the clothes as well as the models, interfering in the way the performance happens ;

Materiality of space overlaps materiality of the fashion model and affects the appearance of clothes;



A Couture House with walls covered with mirrors Fig. 17

theater influence	The interior of the fashion rooms was upgraded, mostly influenced by theater. Ceilings received special lighting and music was introduced as to create a narrative and pace. Mirrors were placed on top of the wood panels as to help clients to better see the model's body from different angles.
narrative	

Lighting and mirrors were the first elements to disrupt the sense of reality within the defile room.

The light transformed the external aspect of the walls by modifying the recognizable domestic materiality of wood panels, turning them into changeable colorful/bright surfaces. It also unified **organic and inorganic, body and material**, as the light that was transforming the room was the same that was modifying the aspect of the model's visible skin (face and hands). While the audience was immersed in shadows, space and models became one through illumination and heat.

The light range (if color, what color) dramatically changed the way the dresses looked. They became glowing things, exaggerated visual objects detached from the space they inhabited. As the whole lighting mis-en-scene definitely gave the collection a double image – the dress you see in the street is not the dress you see in the defile room – it also introduced the idea of **ephemerality** : it does not have to be real as long as it looks spectacular.

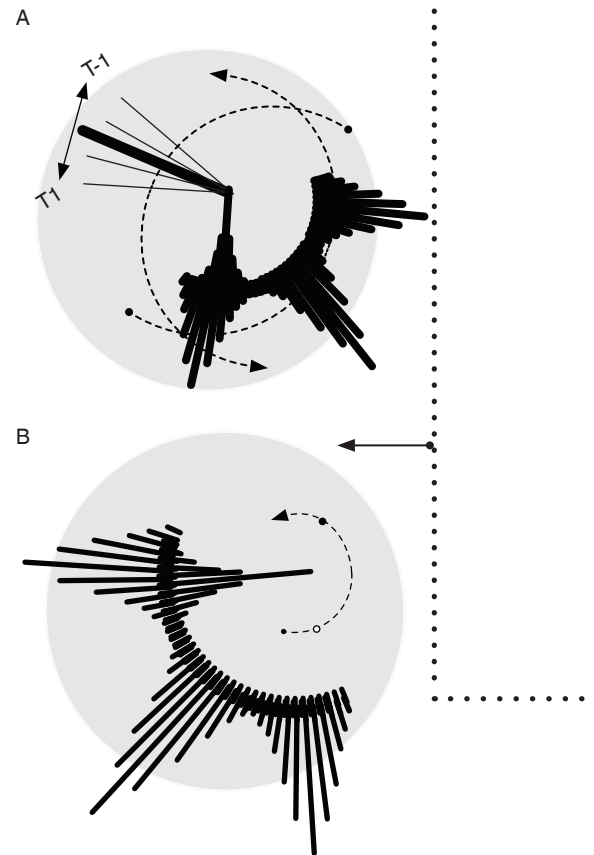
While lighting was defining a common textural territory within body, clothes, and walls, **the mirrors were displacing and fragmenting the model body in time and space**. The first and more simple use of mirror within the defile room was through the fitting room doors, that were typologically organized as a triptic. By placing the model inside this small scenario, clients and buyers could see front, back, left, and right at a time, as the body occupies not only one but three different locations at a once. The same strategy was then adopted in the walls, that were covered from bottom to top with crystal clear mirrors that were not only reflecting the surrounding but also multiplying to the infinite the image of the female model. (Evans, 2013) (Fig. 17)

The mirrored space collides past and future.

Nevertheless, the mirrors also becomes a sort of technological device that, accidentally or not, reproduces the film strip configuration that was widely spreadly

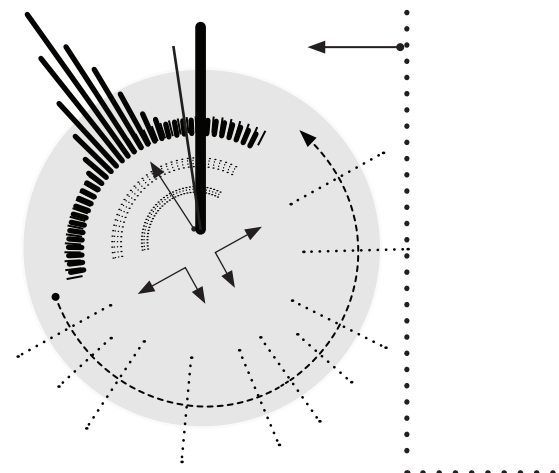
Diagram A : fashion films as it determines the catwalk materiality through a specific media ; films are subject to time manipulation : rewind, pause, acceleration, back, forward. Time, as material and typology, occupies the whole magnitude of the diagram ; bodies and clothes become frames, lights, and speed.

Diagram B: The compact/moveable catwalk has to be interior-exterior assembled ; it is typology and materiality at play in the construction of other modes of representation; Clothes and bodies remain the same as they are already moveable/changeable/compact in their configuration.



The birth of the catwalk as a built platform
Wanamaker Fashion Show, 1910

Fig. 18



.....

becoming popular at that time through the advent of film and photography. Marey's capturing of the movements of the body were the first to portrait clothes in movement, while film was already being used to document the action that was happening inside of the couture houses.

In fact, these predecessors of fashion film had an important role in the dissemination of fashion shows outside of France along with a more compact fashion show format that was throughoutly developed by many couture houses: some used small trucks as moveable theater structure, while others displaced large containers of sets that were assembled in location.

The arrival of the fashion shows in the US marks the definitive consolidation at global level of a fashion system that had corporativized fashion and turned it into a business model.

.....

3.2.2.2. from 1910 – 1960 : system of spectacle

The turn of the century was marked by the first world war. In France, the war affected drastically the couture industry, with the considerable reduction on sales and international buyers that were afraid of war's consequences. Changes in the geography of the fashion system took place for the first time in history: as Paris was under quarantine, the US saw in that an opportunity to promote local talents and to develop their own fashion industry. Although that was a decisive and smart business move, Paris's hegemony as fashion design center was not threatened, as still couture houses maintained a production focused on exclusivity and novelty. The US, on the contrary, did not have an industry of designers but, instead, an industry of production.

.....

The first important shift occurs with the arrival of the fashion show's format in american territory. While the couture houses were private and small events targeted to an exclusive audience, **the american shows were thought out as a way to promote clothes in an industrial level**, bringing these fashion presentation into the department stores and modifying the size, time, and atmosphere in which these shows were organized. / The Wanamaker's fashion show in New York in 1910 was the first to indicate that indeed a fashion system was at play. **First, as a way to allow for a larger and more diverse audience (riches and middle class), the space had to expand: from minimum to maximum, the spatial occupied an auditorium; because of the massive audience, they had to adapt the parading, by placing the models on top of an elevated base, some kind of large scale pedestal,**

.....

A

boundary:
Worth

space:
interior
materiality proeminency
domestic representations

body:
the parisian woman as the
first model body

object:
the princess dress
the practical dress
the shirtwaist

action:
slow-feminine movements

t1
time - moment

t2
time - season

B

boundary:
any

space:
exterior
portable

action:
space becomes
action

t-1
time - unknown

C

boundary:
film

space:
space within a
space

action:
body and clothes
in frames - ongoing

t1 - t-1
time - variable

A

boundary:
American Market

space:
interior-public
materiality and typology shifts
appearance of first catwalk as
we know it today

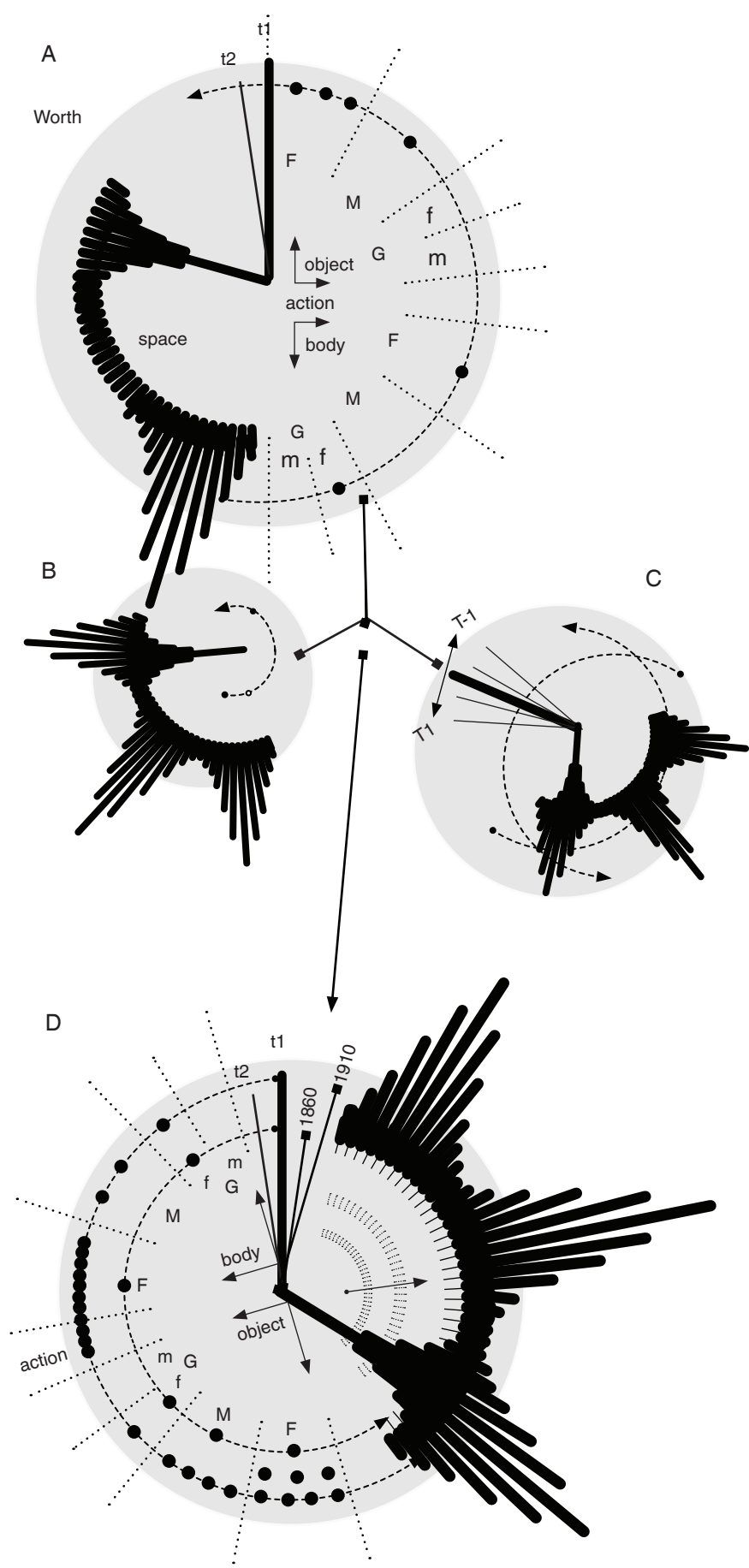
body:
the american model: large for-
mat

object:
mass production

action:
the chorus line, many models
at time

t1
time - moment

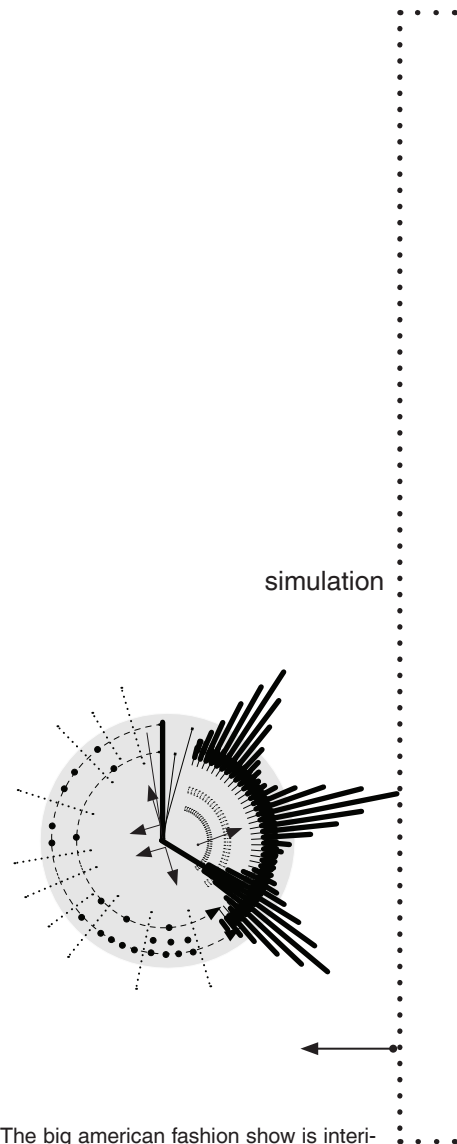
COMPARISON BETWEEN FASHION SHOWS IN FRANCE (A) AND ITS OTHER FORMATS (B AND C) IN RELATION TO FASHION SHOWS IN AMERICA (D)



"The bulk of what I see is, in fact and in principle, no longer within my reach. And even if it lies within reach of my sight, it is no longer necessarily inscribed on the map of the 'I can'.

Paul Virilo, *The Vision Machine*

where the models could be seen from a distance; This same elevated structured had to reach both sides of the space so more models could circulate on top of it: The catwalk, as we know it today, was born. / The show was repeated 3 times a day, one hour and 30 minutes for presentation. Tickets were sold in advance, and lines were forming outside of the auditorium. (Fig. 18)



The second shift in the space of the now defined catwalk was its atmosphere. In Paris, the domestic and the theatrical were dictating a way of looking at clothes that placed the model and the clients inside of the known territory of parisian life. For americans, however, fashion's birth place was never their own territory. For them, fashion as the creative discipline of novelty belonged to France. / *Americans were fast in capitalizing the french atmosphere within their own fashion shows.* In Wanamaker's, for instance, the whole space was decorated as if it as a french (non-american) environment. *People were enchanted by the parisian atmosphere. The show was considered the inspiration of Paris itself, caught up and elaborated on a scale that even Paris had never known* (Evans, 2013). / **The space of the catwalk had become a place to represent the other.**

In 1924, Patou (one of the many couture houses that were adopting Worth's model) did the first casting to bring american models to Paris. Nationality as determinant of the fashion body.

The woman that enters the american catwalk is not, however, french. The third shift highlights the surge of a new format of female that was taller, skinnier, and more athletic. The number of models also doubled, as the shows became larger productions in size and repetition. The **model's body** was put in **production line**, and a series of **copies** of the same women were seen parading on the many department stores in american territory.

Fordism is established in the US. The mass production of automobiles changes the citie's configuration and establishes a new relationship between man and machine.

US's consolidation as a fashion producer divided fashion geographically, with France maintaining its position as creative center and the US as the center of line production.

A

boundary:
Chanel

space:
interior
stairs as may element
mirrors
small scale

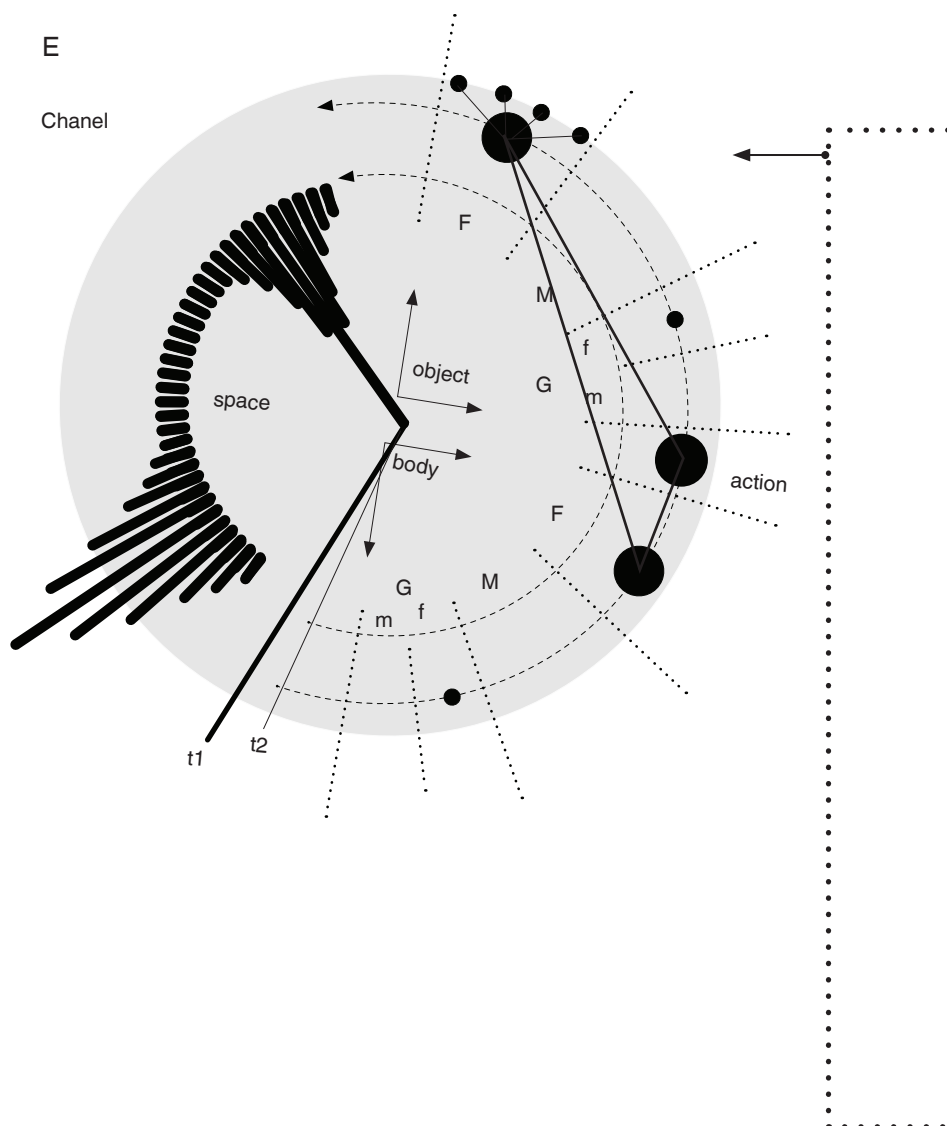
body:
the modernist woman

object:
the mass production
of the iconic black dress

action:
modern movements
mass production

t1
time - moment
t2
time - season

COMPARISON BETWEEN CHANEL'S DIAGRAM (A) AND AMERICAN DIAGRAM (B)



D

boundary:
American Market

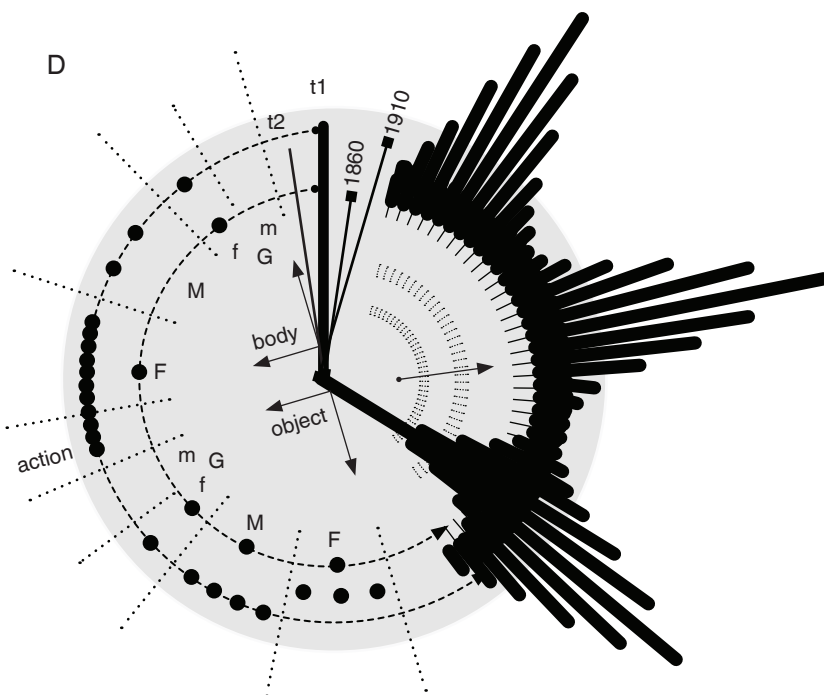
space:
interior-public
materiality and typology shifts
appearance of first catwalk as
we know it today

body:
the american model: large for-
mat

object:
mass production

action:
the chorus line, many models
at time

t1
time - moment



robotic
models

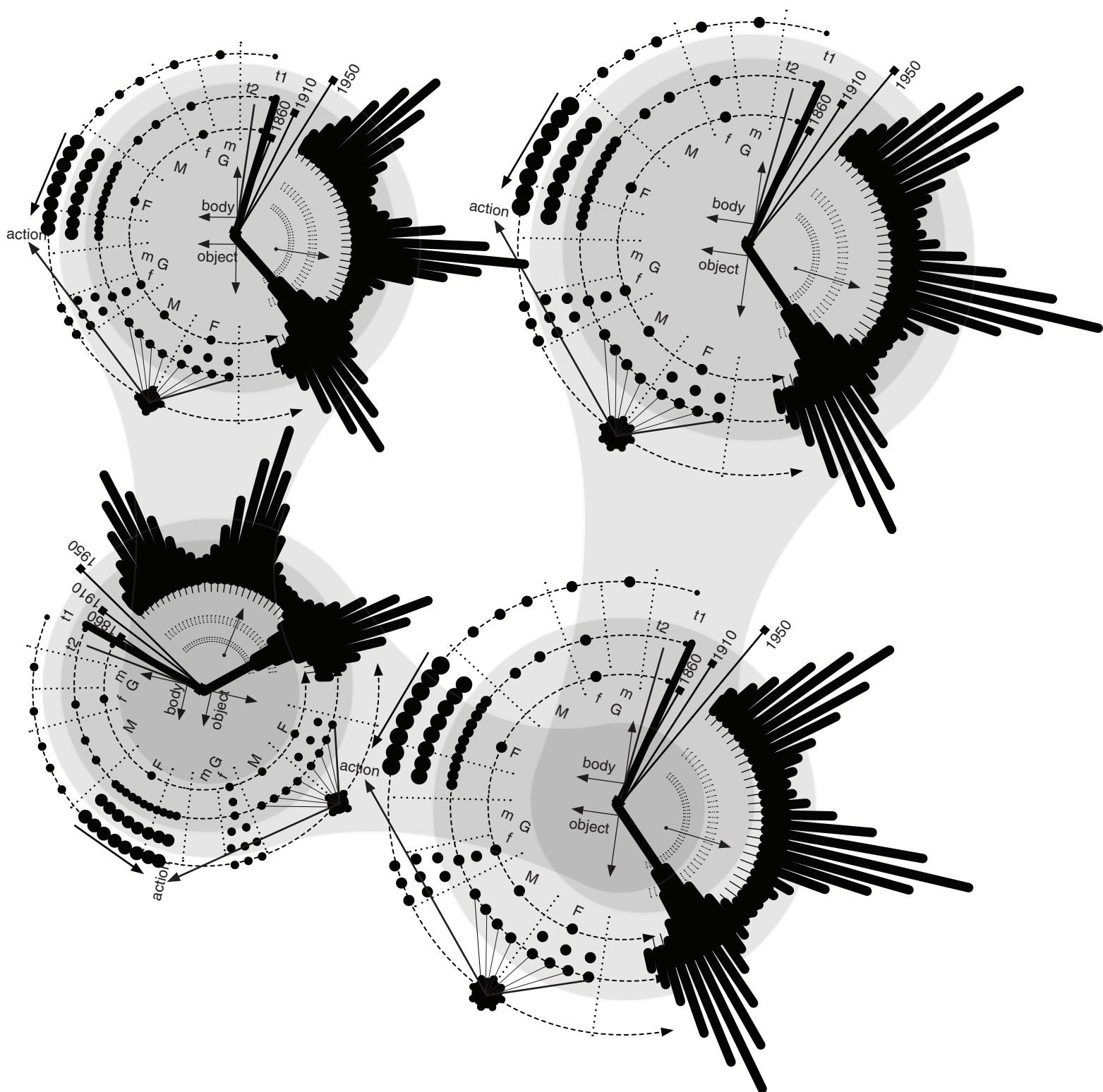
While some couture houses were mesmerized by the way in which american markets turned fashion into a large production line, others reacted against a system that was foremostly reducing fashion to the categorization of popular consumption. Designer like Chanel, who opened her store in the beginning of the war, points towards the first signs of rupture of the french system in two different but parallel directions: her post-war collection transgressed the french romantic image of the modern women with a series of garments inspired by war outfits. Women's image was detached from the excess of the parisian belle epoque. The sleek look and freshness of this new woman was interpreted by Chanel as the objective image of modernity. / Her fashion shows were still presented inside of the couture house while many couturiers were adopting the large format of the department stores. However, she had her models coming from the upper floor through the mirrored staircase (also designed by Chanel) that in many instances worked as her private pinapitum, as she would sit on top of it and see, through the reflections, how her models were showcasing the collection to the audiences. / Chanel's models were displaced vertically, their movements were more controlled, robotic, and less "romantic", and their body shapes were moving away from the parisian figure of the passant: **The girls now were tall, slim, and very similar in shape.**

In France, clothes were simple as the result of mass downturn in economy during the pre and post-war period / Chanel's democratic black dress became the symbol of a simple elegance, easy to manufacture and mass produce. / The short hair known as Bob and the boyish look (the Garçonne) symbolized the free spirit of that time. / The models were young "common" girls as to spread a message of future and positivity for the post-war period.

By the end of the 1920's, the french fashion shows were dominated by three themes: spectacle, the rationalization of the body, and the association of movement and modernity (Evans, 2013).

The play of representation within the defile room was accessorized with the inclusion of popular dances such as Tango and Charleston. Models were now performing, or better saying, replicating the reality of international ballrooms. Some of these performances were mimicking the dance chorus line as models being organized one next to the other, in sequence: a pre-idealization of the line formation that later became a constant in many fashion shows in the US.

BOOM OF FASHION SHOW'S SYSTEM WITHIN AMERICA: THE BIRTH OF THE FASHION SYSTEM



spectacle
cinema
television



Fig. 19

The exchange between the US and France continued throughout the first half of the century and, by the end of the 30's, fashion shows had become a source of inspiration to Broadway shows that immediately incorporated their formats into a kind of performance – a fashion show per se – that would combine theater, dance, music, and fashion. Hollywood followed the fashion of becoming fashionable: films, actors, and actresses occupied now an important position in spreading fashion system's message of production, sales and exclusiveness. Although famous and rich were occupying the private seats of the fashion shows in Paris, the idea of the celebrity and the concept of the first row was an American invention. The popularization of Hollywood as a producer of pop (and somehow romantic) culture in the 50's, brought the image of fashion shows into the middle class domestic space through television and film.

The mass production system initiated by the US is physically established with the first official fashion event and biannual calendar. New York Fashion Week opens in 1943, and United States becomes a fashion destination. (Fig. 19)

3.2.2.3. from 1960 – mid 90's : system of image

By the end of the 50's, the fashion show's formula of the Couture was solidified. **Novelty**, exclusiveness, and **spectacle** were becoming more important than the collections themselves.

Pret-a-Porter

This scenario found the first and determinant friction in the 60's, when the American model of production became a system. The ready to wear, or as it is known as Pret-a-porter, mass produced clothes and mass produced fashion shows reaching a broader audience that was eager for consumption and willing to be included in the fashion game.

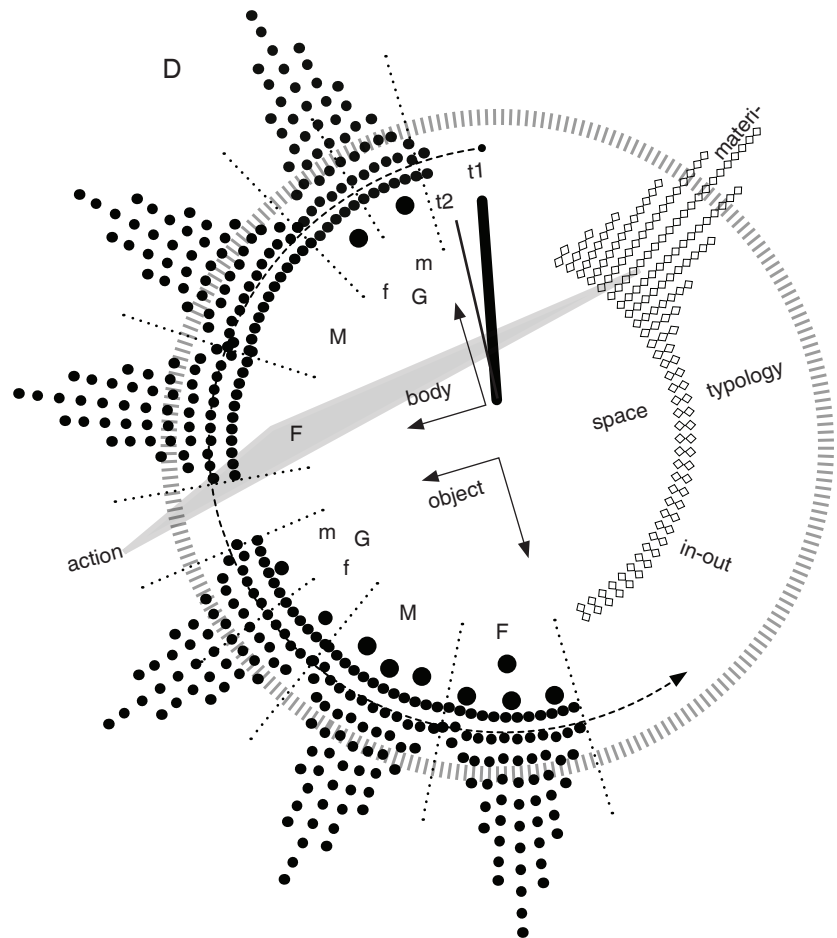
The ready to wear was for everybody. The democratization of the designed clothes in global scale.

fashion designer:

.....
The figure of the couturier, as the master and dictator of fashion, is replaced by the fashion designer: a technician of the mass production, a thinker of the now, someone who was interested in how the social interactions and shifts could be integrated into the fashion industries as a way of producing good and generating interest from as many people as possible.



THE PRET-A-PORTER DIAGRAM



boundary:
young fashion designer in in-
tense exchange with their sur-
roundings

space:
interior-public
many
cheap
fluid

body:
young and urban
international
fluid

object:
mass production

action:
dance
performance
fluid

t1
time - moment
t2
time - season



	As the fashion designers became the new boundary in which fashion was interacting with its environment, it opened up a new creative possibility. The youth movements, such as the hippies, beatniks, mods, and teddyboys, were absorbed within the boundary's filter and immediately conquered as belonging to the territory of fashion, now responding to a crowd of young buyers with financial possibilities as the post-war period forced many of them to start working sooner to support themselves.
youth	The image of a youth with money and thirsty for freedom, equality, music, dance, and art was spread through television and fashion magazines. Airplanes were crossing the ocean moving them from one side to the other. Mimeticism was set in action and the Pret-a-porter phenomena was interpreted equally globally.
television	
fashion magazines	
descentralization	All of a sudden, fashion was decentralized: the absolute control of couture houses was now fragmented in many smaller business - a return to the past - that were producing clothes in vertiginuous speed and higher numbers.
fragmentation	The fragmentation of the production space brought a new mode of presenting the collections. Fashion designers still appropriated the same components - action, space, time - but had to find another format in which accommodate the lack of money, space, and a much younger audience that was miles away from the low pace of conservative fashion shows.
space	
music	Music and body were transformed into the medium in which designers were transmitting their messages. Most of fashion shows, lacking many if not with no backdrops or scenarios, were developed around loud and pop music while models (sometimes actors, dancers, and art performers) were dancing, jumping, and interacting with the crowd.
body	
image	These fashion presentations condensed the construction of the whole image: from make up to accessories, the fashion designer's idea for the collection was going beyond the clothes themselves. Lipsticks, belts, shoes, just to name few, were also ready to wear objects that were under the regulation of mass production. The <i>pret-a-porter</i> reduces the individual's image to the <i>look</i> - an instant image - that was constructed with all the elements necessary to complete the universe in which that individual (the young) could exist.
the look	
photographers	Photographers were determinant in spreading the <i>look</i> . Before, their presence in fashion shows was controlled as to avoid unnecessary copyrights in-

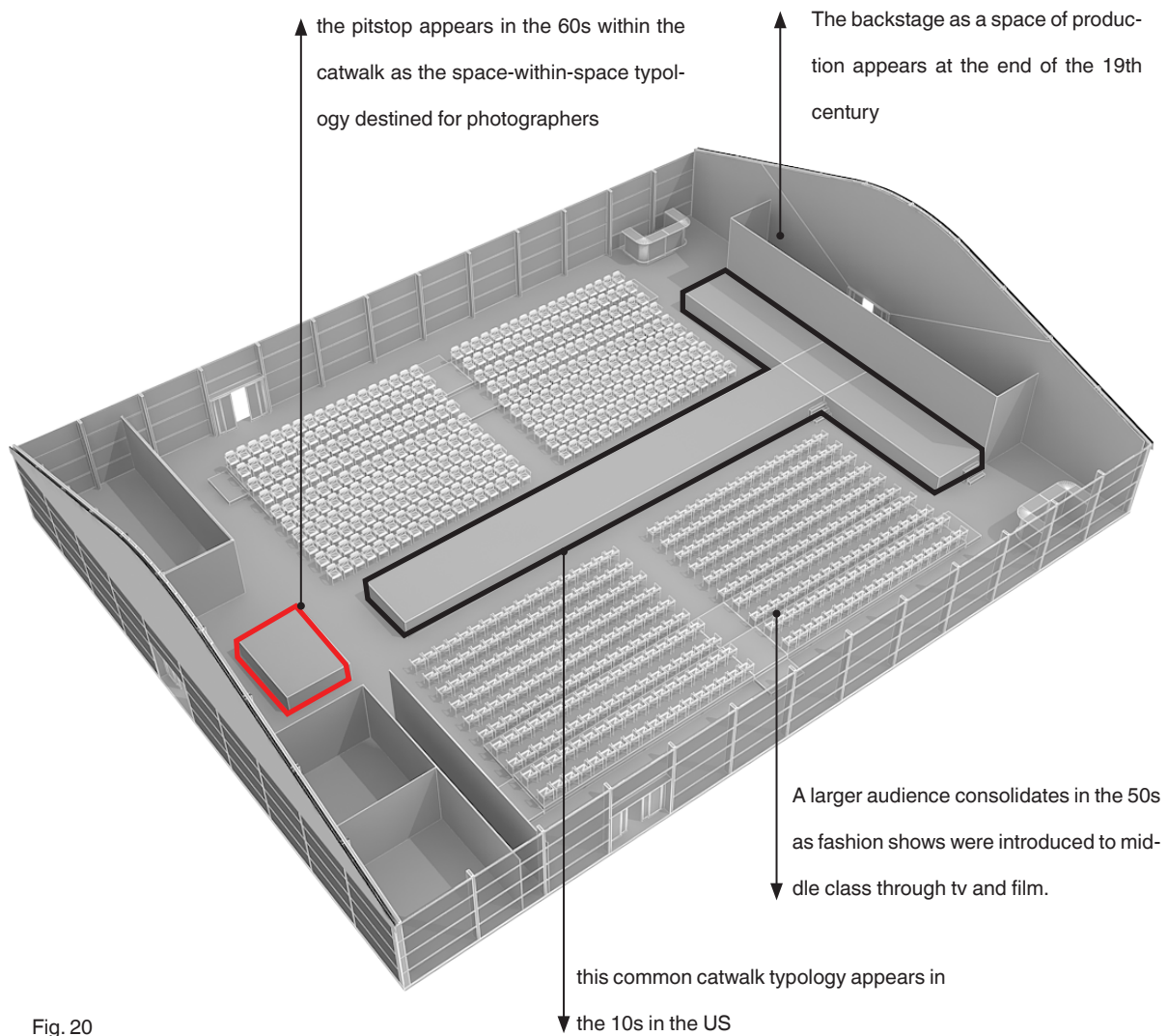


Fig. 20



Supermodels from the 90s: Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, Helena Christensen

pitstop as the place where photographers are located within the catwalk space.

frigements. Now, the not-so-rich fashion designer needs them to disseminate their collection. They first occupied the sides, front, or whatever location was necessary for the documenting of fashion shows. Later, when the ready to wear was more established, the pitstop was inserted within the catwalk as the space-within-space typology destined for them. (Fig. 20)

unisex

Gender and women's liberation became a fashionable theme. Mini-skirts and unisex found on the catwalk a place for experimentation.

individuality

role model

The *pret-a-porter* requires a homogenous body as the large productions do not allow for many variations in size. Twiggy as the fresh, joyful, and pop figure implodes social moment and organic in one petit and standard body. Slowly, fashion industry started sampling elements of individuality from many social spectrums and molding them together in the construction of a (role) standard model.

The financial crisis in the beginning of the 70s slowed down the energy of *pret-a-porter* fashion shows, with models more contained in their movements as if to represent an image of seriousness and accordance to the moment.

race

- The end of the recession (end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s) brought energy and fun back: fashion models like Grace Jones were seen in clubs and parties, spreading the message of a hedonistic life that later became the image of models themselves. The models became synonymous with Diversity: from all sizes, race (the first black model appears around the 70s), and backgrounds, they materialized the synergy of positivity and growth during the after-crisis moment.

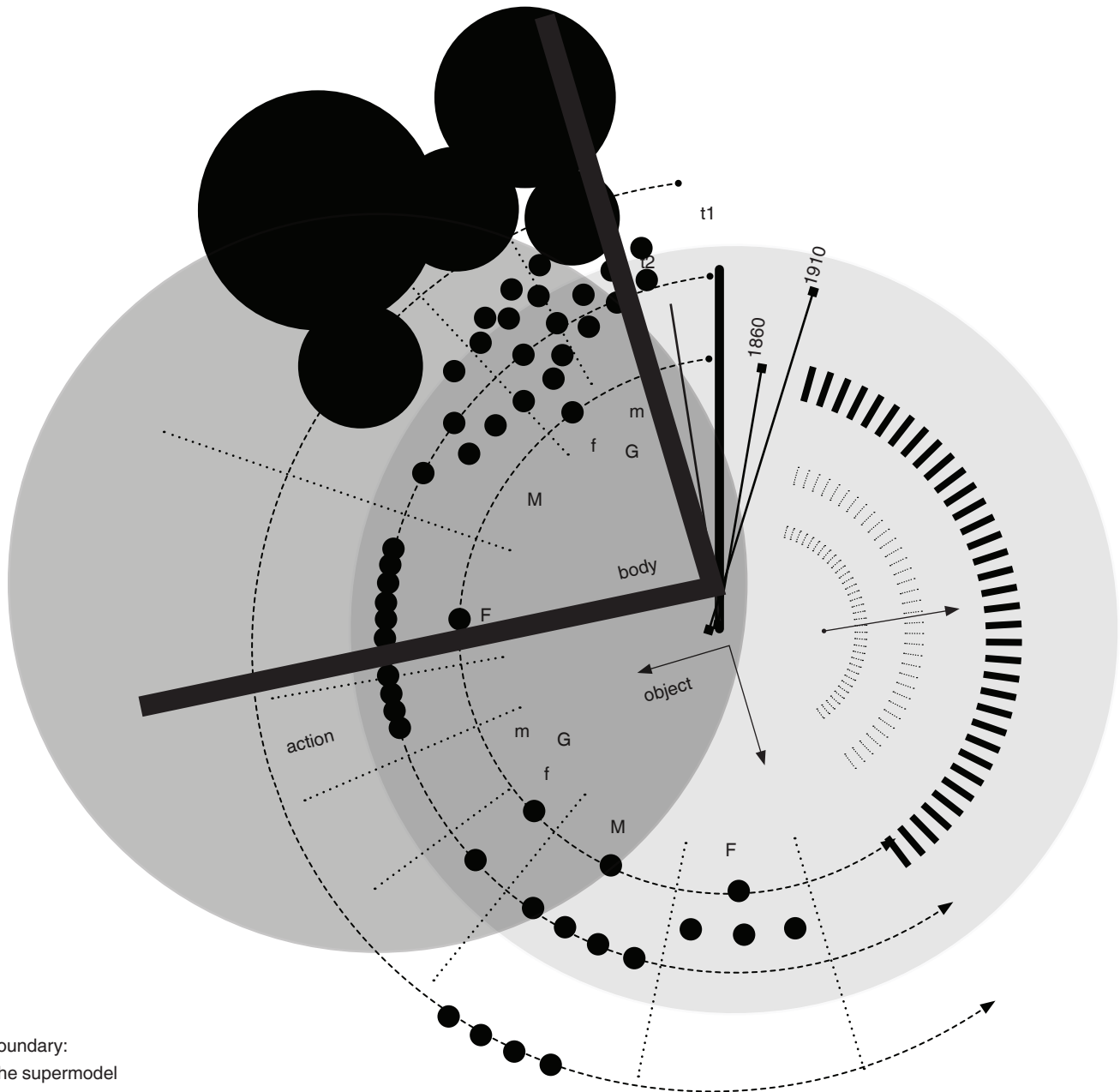
global message

The late financial empowerment of the ready to wear industry brought back the spectacularity of the old fashion shows with a twist: the spectacle for the sake of it was not en vogue; now, fashion designers wanted to transmit a message globally. *Pret-a-porter* industry booms in the UK: in 1984, London Fashion Week is established.

supermodel

The model as a constructed role reached its magnitude in the figure of the supermodel from the 80s, a sort of larger format human being with superpowers distributed along a corporate kind of superficial beauty. This new female, or fashion body, overcame the figure of the brand: to talk about Dior, was to talk about the territory in which Naomi Campbell exists.

THE DIAGRAM OF THE SUPERMODEL



boundary:
The supermodel

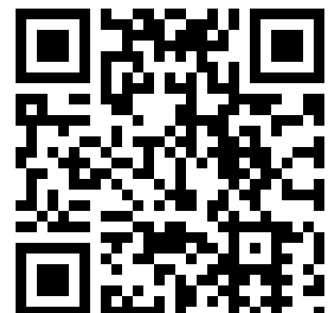
space:
not relevant

body:
the supermodel

object:
the supermodel

action:
the supermodel

t1
time - moment
t2
time - season
t3
time - supermodel



Brand and modeled body became one.

The supermodel was, in fact, the materialization of a financial condition. The end of the 80s was profoundly affected by an unstable market. Luxury brands were hit hard. The image of the well paid super beauty was a marketing strategy of showing off that one specific brand was well enough to even hire extremely expensive models to showcase their products. It was some kind of guaranteed certification that the brand was in business and doing fine.

The phenomena of the ready to wear catwalk developed until the beginning of the 90s when the financial crisis that resulted from the market crash in the end of the 80s produced a huge downturn within fashion industries, putting the creative couture and ready to wear industry on hold. Most of fashion shows adopted a **minimal look** (although showcasing high paid supermodels), attached to the basic elements in formal and conceptual formats: **the white space, the long catwalk with seats along its sides, and the general lighting became the norm of a space that was trembling on its roots.**

sustainability

The crisis also brought up a general concern about consumption. Fashion suddenly identified in sustainability, anti-fur movement, and ethnical textiles a territory that could unify a society that was moving away from fashion's frivolities and unnecessary expenses. It rapidly embraced it with collections and fashion shows that were focused on clothes as a common denominator between opposite social groups or communities with same social concerns. Clothing became a language and form of unification among distant tribes.

Fashion becomes **global**.

3.2.2.4. the turn of the century: signs of rupture

The second fall of Haute Couture (being the first the arrival of ready to wear) resulted from the financial crisis that started in the 90s. Before, there were about 1500 haute couture buyers around the world. Now, there are less than 300. The industry seems to be collapsing, with a serious reduction in the sales of perfumes (responsible for 50% of net sales), in a society that was less interested about clothes and more interested in going through the economical downturn.



Top left: Givenchy by Alexander McQueen, 1998

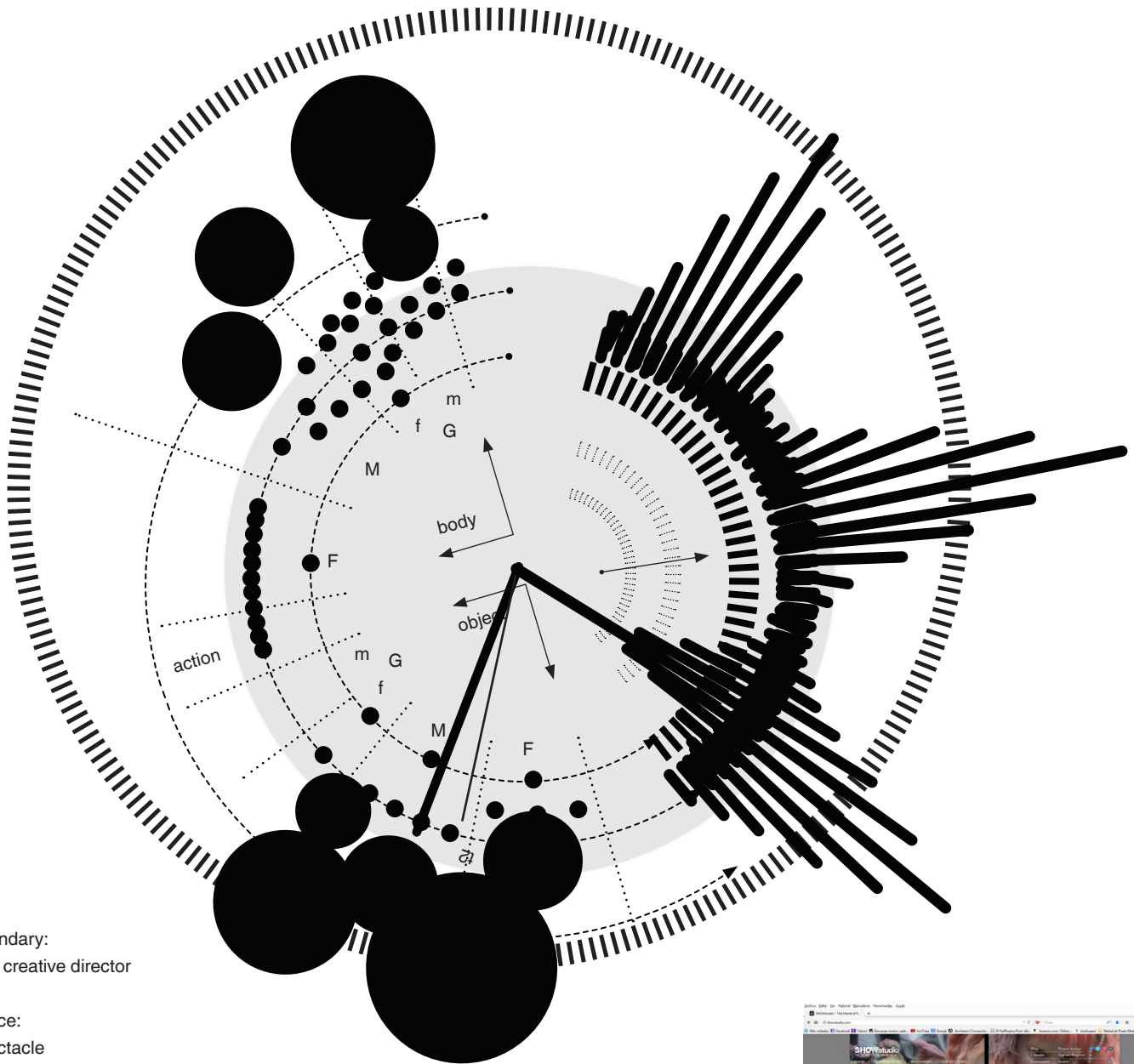
Top right: Tom Ford for Gucci 1997

Bottom left: John Galliano for Dior, 1997

Bottom right: Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton, advertisement

Fig. 21

media	<p>The battle between luxury brands in recovery could be divided in two groups of influence within the scenario of rupture or “otherness” in the industry. From one side, Givenchy and Dior with respectively Alexander McQueen and John Galiano that were introduced as real prophets of style. Between 1997-1998, both companies injected an overdosis of McQueen and Galiano in the media. The 2000 journalists invited for both fashion shows were unanimous: “Romance is back”, “It is chic. It is french”! (Riviere, 1998). It was the mediatic victory of an industry that was collapsing financially. In fact, Alexander McQueen sold only 5 dresses during that season.</p>
marketing experiments network aestheticized information	<p>Despite all the economical downturn, the Galiano-McQueen combo resulted in one of the largest marketing experiments in fashion history, with the culmination of a networked dissemination of images in global scale: <i>thousands of pages of impossible dresses, of insect-women, of reptoid-women, dinosaur-women, selling nothing more than just aestheticized information rather than actual clothes</i> (Riviere, 1998).</p>
strategical thinking	<p>The mediatic war between Givenchy and Dior found a counterpart on the strategical thinking of Gucci and Louis Vuitton. Marc Jacobs, recently hired by Louis Vuitton to boost the company’s image, turns the LV logo into a product where contemporary art meets fashion: windowshops by Olafur Eliason, video animations by Takashi Murakami, and Lil Kim tattooed with LV Logos.</p> <p>Tom Ford (a fashion designer with a background in architectural design), on the other hand, was selling what until then was not found on catwalks: sex. The fashion models, all dressed in minimal, tight, and edgy designs, had shiny and artificial looking skins. They were sweating as the wall of the fashion shows, that were also shiny and reflective. As the advertisements, that were all around sweaty men and women kissing, naked, reanacting fellatios, mouths wide open. Gucci’s stores were covered with shiny glasses, reflections, metal...everything was dripping in sweat. While mainstream Fashion was selling the look of a hypothetical person that one could never be, Tom Ford was undressing male and female models, as clothes are not necessary when one is having sex. (Fig. 21)</p>
business strategy	<p>Jacobs and Ford’s method of work , just like Worth in the 19th century, broke away from the current status of the industry: as Givenchy and Dior were focusing on the image of one creative mind, Louis Vuitton and Gucci developed a business strategy that involved a group of creative professionals (each group supervised by a creative director) that was encompassing professionals from art field, new media field, photography, sociologist (Lipovetsky works</p>



boundary:
The creative director

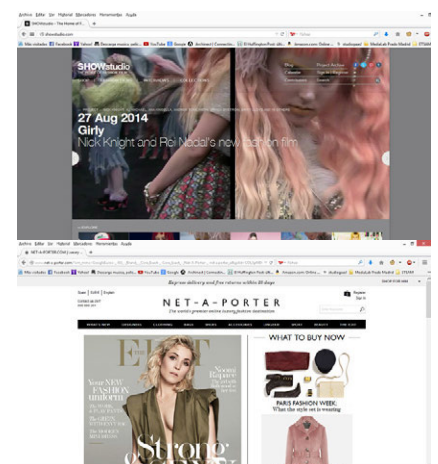
space:
spectacle
scale
drama

body:
models
non-human

object:
minimal
luxury

action:
parading and acting

t2
time - season
t3
time - the creative director



Studioshow.com (top) and Netaporter.com (bottom), the first online experiments on fashion

Fig. 22

for Louis Vuitton), coolhunters, designers and so forth.

internet	Internet's unparallel boom in 1995 takes only 5 years to extend into the industry. Net_a_porter (a website dedicated to selling pret-a-porter) and Showstudio (a website of fashion films) were launched on the web in 2000. Showstudio, by fashion photographer Nick Knight, was showcasing short films – about 3 minutes long – with a sometimes extremelly conceptual narrative. Some of the videos do not show clothes at all. Sometimes, the video editing manipulates them to the point where they are not recognizable. Fashion films are also a cheaper format, more accessible to the ready-to-wear industry and new designers in business. They are effective in spreading the message, but not effective in presenting a collection. Still they become a success. (Fig. 22)
conceptual narrative	
online	Net_a_porter, on the other hand, developed the concept of a magazine in website format where you could 'click' to buy while trying to source product online for a fashion shoot. Now you do not need to try clothes. In fact you do not even need to see it in person.
transversal discipline exaggeration dissemination virtual web clothes	By the turn of the century, Fashion industry had become a transversal discipline of many professionals whose currency was the exaggeration of its content through media just for the means of disseminating the brand as a product. It also became an industry that had officially set foot inside of the non-physical territory of the virtual, converting commerce and representation into tools of web navigation that were moving the user away from the physical contact between clothes and skin.
	According to Riviere (1998), the turn of the century represents a moment when Fashion stopped being fashion (as related to the production of clothes)and <i>became the culmination of its own existance</i> (visual impact, banality, fame, money, and spectacle).

Of Montreal - Suffer For Fashion

*We just want to emote 'til we're dead
I know we suffer for fashion or whatever
We don't want these days to ever end
We just want to emasculate them forever
Forever, forever*

*Oh pretty sirens don't go flat
It's not supposed to happen like that
Not like that, not like that*

*We've got to keep it physical
When our tele's are 6 hours away
Please call to say that you miss me, feel me or
whatever
Vicissitudes are boxing our heads
Do they just want to emaciate them forever?
Forever, forever*

Now pretty sirens don't go flat
It's not supposed to happen like that
Not like that, not like that

*We've got to keep our little click clicking at
130 B.P.M., it's not too slow
If we got to burn out, let's do it together
Let's all melt down together*

*Together, let's go together
Let's do it together, let's go together*

Forever, forever

Now pretty sirens don't go flat
It's not supposed to happen like that
Not like that, not like that

*We've got to keep our little click clicking at
130 B.P.M., it's not too slow
If we got to burn out, let's do it together
Let's all melt down together*

Together, let's go together
Let's do it together, let's go together

